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No. 397

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Lt. Baxter 90

FIVE DISCOURSES ON THE TRUTH AND INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE.

DISCO

ROCKEFELLER LIBRARY

PARTICULARLY DESIGNED FOR THE BENEFIT OF YOUTH.

BIBLE

BY CHARLES BACKUS, A. M.
PASTOR OF A CHURCH IN SOMERS.

Published according to Act of Congress.

HARTFORD:
PRINTED BY HUDSON & GOODWIN.

1797.

BERKELEY BAPTIST
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Discourses, for substance, were delivered in the place where the writer statedly ministers. What was meant only for a single congregation, is, by the desire of the hearers, now made public. Whether the Book which christians take for their guide, is from heaven or of men, is an inquiry of the highest importance; and in which not a few, at the present time, feel deeply interested from opposite motives. This short summary of the principal arguments in support of revealed religion, is indebted to the defences which have gone before it, and claims no advance in a subject which has employed so many abler pens. It is hoped that this compendious view may be useful to some who have not had access to the large treatises, which have been published on the truth and inspiration of the Bible.

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Discourses on Divine Revelation.

DISCOURSE I.

On the Truth of the Scriptures.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 16.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

MINISTERS of the gospel are under high and peculiar obligations, in every age of the church, to bear public testimony in favor of the truth and divine original of the religion which they are called to preach. The performance of this duty

muſt lie with uncommon weight upon their minds at the preſent time; when not a few in America, and vaſt numbers on the eaſtern continent, who were educated in the belief of chriſtianity, openly reprobate it, as the offspring of fraud or ſuperſtition. It is well known that the diſciples of infidelity are multiplying daily, and that they are induſtriously employed in throwing doubts and ſcruples relative to the holy ſcriptures, before the minds of thoſe who have not, as yet, gone over to their ſide. Whoever has his eyes open to diſcern the moral complexion of the day, and is friendly to the preſent and future welfare of mankind, will feel no ſmall concern for the riſing generation in particular. Their inexperience, and the warmth of their paſſions render them liable to become an eaſy prey to thoſe licentious opinions, which are highly pleaſing to the corrupt taſte of the human heart.

I REQUEST of you, my young friends, as well as of perſons of every age, a candid, ſerious, and patient hearing, while I adduce ſome of the leading evidences in ſupport of the truth and inſpiration of the Bible, in a more ample manner than I have hitherto done in my public diſcourſes. In proſecuting this deſign ſome things will be intro-

duced, which may not, ſeparately conſidered, be thought very intereſting; but I hope it will appear in the final reſult, that they are neceſſary parts of the general ſubject on which I am entering.

If the bible be a piece of prieſtcraft, or the work of diſhoneſt politicians, let it be given up, and ſink into contempt: But if it be from heaven, as we have the fulleſt evidence to believe, let it be received with all the reverence due to THE WORD OF THE LORD. Not all the art or ſophiſtry of men will be able to overthrow a book that was dictated by infinite truth: And the guilt of thoſe who make the attempt will be awfully great; for they will be found even to fight againſt God!

Those perſons in chriſtian countries who acknowledge the exiſtence of one God, but deny all revealed religion, have adopted the name of *Deiſts*. They are far from being agreed among themſelves, except in the ſingle point of denying the divine original of the ſcriptures. A conſiderable number of deiſts in the laſt and preſent century, have appeared as writers againſt the truth and inſpiration of the bible. Some of them were men of acuteneſs and learning; ſuch as Lord Herbert, the Earl of Shaftſbury, Lord

Bolingbroke, Chubb, Hume, Voltaire, Rosseau, and others. Our country has not given birth to any deistical writer of much note. Mr. Thomas Paine, whose zeal for infidelity is well known, was born and educated in England. On his leaving the United States of America, a few years since, he repaired to France, where he soon found the leaders of a large and powerful nation, as warmly engaged as himself for the downfal of the christian religion, and the propagation of infidelity through the world. Those persons who have read Mr. Paine's "Age of Reason," the first and second parts, have no cause to doubt that he has spoken the language of his heart; for he has gone so far as to utter an oath in a formal manner that he is a deist. On his darling theme he has started little or nothing new, nor has he handled the subject so ably as several who went before him; but in impudence and ridicule he has few equals. It is much easier to deal in confident assertions, or to raise a laugh among the thoughtless, than to offer rational conviction to the mind.

It cannot be questioned that many are fond of calling themselves deists or infidels, because they have heard that some great men have done so heretofore, or are doing so

the preſent time; though they have never read a ſyllable that they wrote, and are wholly ignorant of the arguments which they employ in ſupport of their cauſe. Converſions to infidelity are eaſily made among thoſe who are void of principle, or are galled by ſcripture reproofs, or are determined to indulge their luſts. Hence it need not appear ſtrange, that in a ſeaſon of general licentiouſneſs, many openly renounce the pure religion that came from above.

A LOOSE way of thinking on moral and religious ſubjects has a ſtrong tendency to blind the mind, and harden the heart. In the hiſtory of the New Teſtament frequent mention is made of the *Sadducees*, a ſect who denied a future ſtate, the reſurrection of the body, and the exiſtence of angel or ſpirit. They were among the moſt bitter enemies of Chriſt and his apoſtles. I find no ſatisfactory proof of the converſion of one of them to chriſtianity. When any have deliberately become unbelievers in the truth and divinity of the ſcriptures, they have ſeldom been reclaimed. In moſt inſtances they have proceeded from bad to worſe, until according to human appearance, they have cut themſelves off from hope. God, who hath the hearts of all men in his hand,

is able to arreſt infidels of the higheſt claſs in their courſe, and ſubdue them by his grace; but we need ſtronger evidence than has yet appeared, to be ſanguine in our expectations that any of them will be recovered from the error of their way. There is room to hope that ſuch as are infidels through inattention may be excited to careful inquiry, and eſcape from the ſnare in which they have begun to be entangled; and that thoſe whoſe faith is wavering may be ſettled in the belief that the bible is true and from God. Thoſe who have an anxious deſire to be ſatisfied on ſo important a ſubject, will liſten with avidity to every attempt to diſcover the grounds on which the ſcriptures may be defended, againſt thoſe who condemn them as fraught with cunningly deviſed fables.

Pious chriſtians are fully ſatisfied that the religion which they have embraced is of divine original; but the holy exerciſes of their hearts are not to be held up before infidels for their conviction. The latter will ſay, (and they will declare a fact not to be doubted) that they know nothing about the feelings of chriſtian piety. Hence it may be expected that they will conſider all who profeſs ſuch feelings as enthuſiaſts, and unworthy of notice. Recourſe muſt be

had to argument ; both to eſtabliſh the religion in diſpute, and to remove objections. The faithful witneſſes, though it has been their lot to propheſy a long time clothed in ſackcloth, will not withhold their teſtimony in favor of the oracles of God. Being not aſhamed of their hope they will labor to produce ſuch reaſons for its ſupport, as may ſilence, if they do not convince, gainſayers. The glory of God, and the felicity of his holy intelligent kingdom, are directly promoted by the exhibition of truth, however it may "torment them that dwell on the earth." The friends of revelation feel themſelves bound to ſtand up in its defence : The effects of their exertions they leave with God.

THE words of the Apoſtle Paul in the text, addreſſed to Timothy, a young miniſter, may lead us to attend to the arguments by which the ſcriptures are demonſtrated to be true and from God. It is added in the verſe next following, *That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furniſhed unto all good works :* The meaning of which is, that Timothy by attending to the evidences and deſign of all ſcripture, would be completely furniſhed, as a chriſtian and a miniſter, for the diſcharge of every duty to which he ſhould be called.

When the apoſtle declares that *all ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God*, he has particular reference to the writings of the Old Teſtament. Theſe were the ſcriptures which Timothy had known from a child, as is mentioned in the verſe preceding the text. At the time when Paul wrote this epiſtle the whole of the new teſtament had not been committed to writing: But ſuch is the connexion between its ſeveral books, and of the whole with the Jewiſh ſcriptures, that the two teſtaments muſt ſtand or fall together. Whatever diſtinct proofs are given of the truth and inſpiration of the new teſtament, and however convincing theſe may be to a total ſtranger to the old teſtament, it is well known to every one who has read the bible with attention, that the four evangeliſts, the acts of the apoſtles, and the epiſtles, abound with quotations from, and alluſions to, the writings of Moſes and the prophets, on the aſſumption that they were dictated by the Holy Ghoſt. Hence, it has always been admitted both by chriſtians and deiſts, that the two teſtaments are ſo interwoven that they muſt be jointly eſtabliſhed, or given up, as the word of the Lord.

The inſpiration of all ſcripture is not only declared in the text, but its uſe is pointed

out: *It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs.* It is profitable *for doctrine*, as it directs us what to believe—*for reproof*, as it appriſes us of ſin and warns us againſt it—*for correction*, as it recals us from wandering—and *for inſtruction in righteouſneſs*, as it inculcates all the duties of piety and virtue, with the proper motives to obſerve them.

In diſcourſing from the text, at this time, it is propoſed,

I. To conſider the truth of the ſcriptures of the Old and New Teſtament.

II. Explain in what ſenſe the phraſe, *Inſpiration of God*, is to be underſtood when applied to *all ſcripture.*

III. Bring arguments to prove that all ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God.

Under each head it is deſigned to notice ſeveral objections, as we paſs along in the diſcourſes.

I. Let us conſider the truth of the ſcriptures of the Old and New Teſtament.

Every one will eaſily diſcern the propriety of conſidering the truth of the ſcriptures,

or the authenticity of these writings, in the first place: since if they could be shown to be a forgery, their inspiration must be given up; for God will not bear witness in support of a falsehood. Besides, we must be satisfied that the scriptures are true, or contain an authentic narration of facts, before we can be warranted to produce arguments from their history to establish their inspiration.

In the part of the subject before us, we are to consider the apparent candor and integrity of the men who are said to have penned the Bible; the circumstances attending the facts they narrate; the corresponding state of the world; and the harmony of the several writers of the scriptures, though living in places and periods remote from each other. To these may be added, the testimony of profane writers, or those who have no claim to inspiration.

When we undertake to examine the truth of the *Pentateuch*, or the five first books of the Bible, said to be written by *Moses*, we have not the advantage of appealing to any cotemporary writer. That there was such a man as Moses, a leader in Israel, has, I think, never been called in question by any deist; and may therefore be taken

for granted. He died about fourteen hundred and fifty years before the birth of Chriſt. There is no profane writer, whoſe works have come down to us, that lived until more than five hundred years after that period, or about the time that Jehoſhaphat reigned in Judah. Herodotus of Greece, is the oldeſt hiſtorian, whoſe writings have eſcaped the ruins of time. He did not flouriſh till more than a thouſand years after the death of Moſes. That father of profane hiſtory did not live until after the return of the children of Iſrael from Babylon. There are no writings now extant ſo ancient as the five books of Moſes, unleſs the book of Job be an exception. This is conceded by many of the learned among the deiſts.

HEATHEN poets and hiſtorians have recorded events which reach as far back as the creation. Though they have written in a fabulous ſtrain; it is evident that they allude to facts which were originally taken from the hiſtory of Moſes. Thoſe writers ſpeak of the happy ſtate of man when he was firſt created; they repreſent that he was placed in a delightful garden, and enjoyed all the bleſſings of what they call the golden age. We alſo find in thoſe authors an account of the iron age, or the unhappy ſtate of man

after he had loſt his primeval innocence. Strabo, the Greek geographer, who lived in an early period of the chriſtian era, informs that Alexander the Great, who died a little more than three hundred years before Chriſt, ſent a perſon to enquire into the manners and doctrine of the Bramins, or the Hindoo prieſts in India. The meſſenger found one of that order named Calanus, who taught him, "That in the origin of nature plenty reigned through all the world. Milk, and wine, and honey, and oil flowed from fountains: but men having abuſed this felicity, God deprived them of it, and condemned them to labor for the ſuſtenance of their lives." Similar repreſentations of man's primitive innocence and happineſs, of his fall, and the bitter fruits of it, have been found in the writings of many of the oriental nations, and in thoſe of the Grecian philoſophers, who borrowed their theology from the eaſt. Theſe accounts were evidently handed down by tradition from ſome of the firſt chapters in Geneſis.

HISTORY and tradition agree with the ſcriptures in aſcribing to mankind the ſame parents, or in deriving them from one pair. The differences in colour have created objections in ſome minds againſt the Moſaic account of

the propagation of the human race. This difficulty is, no doubt, the greateſt that philoſophy can urge. It is certain that climate has ſome influence upon the colour of the ſkin. It is a general fact that the nations who live within the torrid zone are of a darker complexion than the inhabitants of the northern temperate zone. The whites grow darker in the courſe of a few generations by removing into hot climates. It is well known that the Jews, from their attachment to their religion, do not blend with other nations. Experience has determined that thoſe of them who inhabit near the equator for an age or two, are of a darker hue than their brethren who inhabit colder regions for an equal length of time. It will not follow from the influence of climate that men will be exactly of the ſame complexion who have, during any given period, reſided within the ſame parrallels of latitude; for the ſtate of the atmoſphere may be materially affected by high mountains in ſome places, the ſoil, and other cauſes. The Africans on the ſlave coaſt, which lies within the torrid zone, are not equally black. Thoſe who are born and brought up near barren ſands, are blacker than thoſe who have been found in fertile places. The heat of the ſun is much more intenſe on the

former ſoil than on the latter. The manner of living has alſo an effect on the complexion. Tribes who dwell in dirty, ſmoky cabins, or huts, are clad with the undreſſed ſkins of beaſts, and feed on filthy food, are more ſwarthy than thoſe nations who dwell in convenient houſes, and practiſe cleanlineſs in their lodging, apparel, and diet. Hence, we may probably conclude why the American Indians have a darker ſkin than the deſcendants from the Engliſh in the ſame temperate climate; and why the Tartars, and others, that live at the diſtance of a few degrees from the north pole, are more tawny than the civilized nations that lie further to the ſouth.

WHETHER a ſatisfactory ſolution of the difficulty to which we have been attending has been hit upon or not, there are ſo many particulars in which the different nations agree, as to faſten the charge of abſurdity on thoſe who deny them to be of one race, from the differences in the colour of their ſkin. Beſide likeneſs of figure and organs, it has been found that men who are diſſimilar in complexion are alike in the paſſions and appetites both of body and mind; and that by long cohabitation and ſimilar culture the differences between them are not great

than among thoſe who are confeſſedly of one ſtock. The ſimilarity between the different nations and tribes of men, is much greater than can be diſcerned between any two ſpecies of animals that fall under our notice. By facts which have been long accumulating, from the reports of thoſe who have moſt extenſively traverſed this globe whether by ſea or land, the evidence that mankind are all of one race has become deciſive.

ALL nations, that have any records remaining, agree in tracing back the original reſidence of their anceſtors at or near that part of Aſia where ſcripture hiſtory places them before their diſperſion. We can find no account of the origin of nations which will bear examination but that recorded in Gen. x. which concludes with the following words, *Theſe are the families of the ſons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by theſe were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.*

THE antiquity which the Chineſe give to their empire, and to the creation, has long been exploded by the learned, as fabulous. The authentic annals of nations, and the ſtate of the arts and ſciences, beſt agree with the Moſaic chronology.

THE memory of the flood, which happened in the days of Noah, is preserved in the writings and traditions of all the oriental nations. Marks of the deluge are plainly discernible in many places. The productions of the ocean have been discovered in the center of continents, at a great distance from the sea; lodged in high mountains, and in mines and quarries that lie deep in the bowels of the earth. The face of the globe we inhabit appears to have been rent and torn by some violent convulsion. The more the surface and the interior parts of the earth have been explored, the higher is the evidence that it was once overflown by the waters of the deluge.

THE discoveries of circumnavigators, have removed the difficulties of admitting that the earth was peopled in all parts from the plain in the land of Shinar, a little to the west of the Euphrates; on the banks of which river the terrestrial paradise stood. The art of navigation was imperfectly understood in the days of Moses, and long after. It never rose to high perfection until the polar virtue of the loadstone was known. By discovering that the magnet would point the needle in the mariner's compass to the north and south poles, with small variations, the

way was prepared to venture far from the ſight of land, and to go on diſtant voyages. This diſcovery was not made till more than thirteen hundred years after Chriſt. Previouſly to that period veſſels might be caught by ſtorms, or the trade winds, and have been driven to remote iſlands, or to this continent. As the mariners had not the means of returning they muſt have remained in the places to which they were wafted. Shut out as they were from commerce, and being few in number, they would revert to the rude ſtate in which they have been found. The peopling of this weſtern continent, the moſt difficult to account for of any part of the globe, might have been effected not only by the cauſes juſt named, but by emigrations acroſs the narrow ſtrait that divides Aſia and America. It is now known that the north eaſt part of the former, and the north weſt of the latter are divided by a water paſſage of but a few miles in width : and that even ſavages are furniſhed with craft ſufficient for tranſportation.

The boaſt which ſome infidels have made of being able to overthrow the bible, by improvements in the natural and civil hiſtory of the world, and in philoſophy, is wholly without foundation. Modern diſ-

coveries lend their aid in eſtabliſhing, rather than in overthrowing, the Moſaic hiſtory; that part of ſcripture hiſtory which lies at the remoteſt diſtance from us.

The extraordinary facts narrated in the pentateuch, conſidered in all their circumſtances, are ſuited to confirm its truth. In this place may be mentioned the plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians, the drying up of the water of the red ſea to open a paſſage through its channel for the Iſraelites, their forty years journey in the wilderneſs, the manna rained down from heaven to furniſh them with bread, the quails brought round their camp to afford them meat, and the water that guſhed out of the rock to quench their thirſt. Theſe and ſimilar wonders were wrought to eſtabliſh the belief—That Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, was the one only living and true God, in oppoſition to the polytheiſm, or idolatry, which reigned among all other nations at that time. Had the ſtory of Moſes been falſe, the enemies of the Iſraelites would have united in detecting the impoſture; and they could not have failed of ſucceſs. The known attachment of idolaters to their religion, would not have ſuffered them to be idle ſpectators of events of ſuch importance. The facts af-

ferted were of a public nature, and therefore muſt have been overthrown had they been falſe. Beſides, a public appeal was made, every year, to ſome of the moſt remarkable of them, by the feaſt of the paſſover, and the feaſt of tabernacles: The former was deſigned as a ſtanding memorial of the ſalvation of the Iſraelites on the night in which the firſt born of the Egyptians were ſlain; the latter was inſtituted to preſerve the memory of the Iſraelites dwelling in tents in their journey through the wilderneſs. Had Moſes been an impoſtor he would not have appointed annual feaſts to keep events in remembrance, which he knew never had an exiſtence. His acknowledged ſagacity muſt have taught him, that on every return of thoſe occaſions, inquiry would have been awakened, which ſoon would have proved fatal to his ſcheme, had it been built on fraud. His conduct had no appearance like to that of impoſtors; who always attempt to hide their deſigns from the public eye, and to avoid ſcrutiny as far as poſſible.

ADMITTING human nature to have been the ſame in the days of Moſes as now, would it be poſſible for a man to frame ſuch a ſtory as he delivers and obtain general belief, if the whole were a fiction? would he preſume

to say, that he went into a powerful kingdom and led out thence more than two millions of people—that the sea was opened to make a passage for them on their departure—that their enemies in the pursuit of them were drowned in the same channel through which they passed on dry ground—that the redeemed nation were afterwards led forty years in a wilderness, where they were miraculously supported from Heaven—and that in their defenceless state they were protected from their enemies, who came upon them in great numbers with arms in their hands—I say, would he have uttered such a story, in case he knew the whole to be a lie, with any expectation of being believed? Moses could not have indulged any hope of extensive or lasting credence, if his whole marvellous account were false, unless he had been a fool or a madman. The ability he discovered has cleared him from the imputation of either of these characters from the enemies of revelation.

GROUNDLESS stories, it is true, have prevailed for a time, but they have always been found to lose even their temporary credit, when neither fraud nor violence have prevented or silenced inquiry. Fond as mankind are of the marvellous, they will in a

ſhort time correct their credulity in particular inſtances, if they are laid under no reſtraint in examination; eſpecially when facts ſo notorious as the above are appealed to as proof. Granting, as we muſt, that the overthrow of one deluſion will not cure the human mind of a liability to be deceived again, yet nothing is more true than that the multitude will not hold to any one fable long, when the public evidence which it claims for its ſupport is diſcovered to be falſe. Let one now riſe up in this country, or in any other, with the profeſſed deſign of inculcating a new creed, and appeal to facts in proof as public as were thoſe recorded in the Moſaic writings, he would not be believed long, if the facts which he affirmed were not real; provided neither ſtratagem nor force were employed to blind the eyes of the multitude, or to keep up the credit of the new religion. That the hiſtory of Moſes has been generally believed, and that for a long time, by moſt who have been acquainted with it, is not denied by its enemies. We would aſk theſe laſt, on what principle this faith can be accounted for, if the narration on which it reſts be a forgery? If Moſes were either artful or tyrannical enough to keep the Iſraelites in the dark, he could not have enchained the minds

of the furrounding nations. The Egyptians in particular, who were at that time the moſt acquainted with ſcience of any nation on the globe, would have exerted themſelves to detect the impoſture, had there been the leaſt proſpect of ſucceſs.

No man or body of men from the earlieſt ages to the preſent day, have taken it upon them to point out the time or the place when and where the Moſaic religion was fabricated, if it be a forgery. Why has not this buſineſs been undertaken? It has not been omitted through a want of abilities for inveſtigation in ſome infidels. Nor have the adverſaries of the Bible withheld their efforts in the preſent inſtance, through want of hatred of Moſes; for no man has been more reproached and vilified by them than he. It can eaſily be told when, where, and by whom, the Mahometan impoſture was framed. Why, I again aſk, has no one undertaken to unravel the plot of Moſes, if his ſcheme be the offspring of fraud? The true anſwer is, that no man of thought and reflection has ever felt himſelf equal to the taſk. The facts of which his hiſtory is compoſed are too glaring to be denied.

The Iſraelites cannot, with the leaſt colour of truth, be conſidered as conſpiring

with Moſes to eſtabliſh a falſe or a groundleſs ſtory. For though their character, after they were brought under the Sinai covenant, was not ſo corrupt as that of other nations, it was yet far from being faultleſs. They are repreſented as a murmuring and perverſe people, and very prone to idolatry. Within a ſhort time after the law had been delivered to them from the mouth of JEHOVAH, with ſolemn and awful majeſty, they, with Aaron at their head, formed a molten calf, and worſhipped it, ſaying, "Theſe be thy gods, O Iſrael, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." While they were in the wilderneſs they manifeſted a ſtrong inclination to return to the country where they had been in bondage, and contemplated chooſing a leader to conduct them back into that land of idols. Yet perverſe as that nation was, and reluctant as they were to the worſhip of the Lord, they have borne witneſs to the truth of the hiſtory given of them by Moſes, and ſubſequent Old Teſtament writers. That people bear teſtimony to the ſame facts at the preſent time. Individuals and collective bodies of men wiſh to have their names handed down to poſterity with honor. They ſhudder at the thought of a diſgraceful memory. I[illegible]e admit that the Iſraelites would lend aid to a forgery to render themſelves

the objects of reproach to their succeſſors, we muſt ſuppoſe that a trait exiſted in their characters, which diſtinguiſhed them eſſentially from all the reſt of mankind that have lived from the creation to this day.

THE writings of Moſes carry all the marks of impartiality. He not only mentions the faults of the nation, but his own faults; and proceeds to tell the particular offence which prevented him from paſſing over Jordan, and leading the tribes into the land of promiſe. Do theſe things carry the marks of a diſhoneſt mind? Do they not extort from every candid perſon a confeſſion of the integrity of Moſes?

AN objection has been brought forward againſt the truth and authenticity of the Pentateuch, from the paſſage recorded in Numbers xii. 3. *Now the man Moſes was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.* Upon theſe words Paine remarks, in his uſual ſtyle and ſpirit, "If Moſes ſaid this of himſelf, he was a vain "and arrogant coxcomb, and unworthy of "credit; and if he did not ſay it, the books "are without authority."

To this objection it may be replied,

1ſt. THAT from the account given of Moſes, it appears that he was a man

markable meekneſs. He bore the inſults of the people at large, and of his brother Aaron and ſiſter Miriam, with a compoſure rarely to be met with even among perſons of real piety. There are certainly occaſions in which a man may appeal to the inoffenſiveneſs and purity of his own character. The reproachful and cruel treatment which Moſes received juſtifies a vindication of himſelf. The credibility of other hiſtorians of far leſs worth than he, has not been called in queſtion from the things they have ſpoken in favor of themſelves, when driven to make a defence againſt the tongue of ſlander.

2nd. The text in Numb. xii. is inſerted by way of parentheſis, and might have been added by ſome ſubſequent writer of the Bible. The account given of the death and burial of Moſes, in the laſt chapter of Deuteronomy, muſt have been added by ſome other perſon. Samuel did not write any part of the ſecond book which bears his name. It is not ſuppoſed that he wrote the whole of the firſt. In the xxvth chapter of the firſt book mention is made of his death. If this event be not an anticipation, but is introduced in the order or the time in which it happened, the evidence is deciſive that he did not write any more of thoſe books than the

twenty four chapters preceding. This does nothing towards deſtroying or weakening the truth and authenticy of thoſe books, unleſs it were ſomewhere affirmed in the Bible, that they both and throughout were penned by Samuel. This is no where ſaid. While the canon of ſcripture was unfiniſhed, the ſucceeding writers might add to the parts which preceded. The manner of removing the difficulty urged from Numb. xii. 3, will be eaſily underſtood by a compariſon. Let us ſuppoſe that in ſome future diſtant period, in a new edition of Doctor Ramſay's Hiſtory of the American Revolution, it ſhould be added in a parentheſis, or in a note, that Dr. Ramſay was a man of ſcience, and of an eſtimable character, would this deſtroy or even weaken the credibility of his hiſtory? The application is eaſy to the caſe of Moſes. Some other perſon inſerted the eulogy upon him: which in no way affects the truth of what the deceaſed wrote, unleſs it be an additional confirmation.

I CONCLUDE this diſcourſe with obſerving that the truth of the Moſaic hiſtory is ſuppoſed in all the other writings both of the Old Teſtament and the New. The evidence we hope to produce in favor of their truth and authenticity, will corroborate the arguments that have been brought in ſupport of the truth of the five firſt books of the Bible.

DISCOURSE II.

On the Truth of the Scriptures.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 16.

ALL scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

HAVING in my first discourse, from the words just read, attended to the evidence in support of the truth of the Mosaic writings, I now proceed to consider the truth of the other scriptures.

THAT the Israelites once inhabited the land of Canaan is as well known, and as universally believed by all sorts of men, as any part of ancient history. Infidels have never denied this, nor that the Israelites were put into possession of that country by conquering its former inhabitants. On that conquest they have raised one of their most

formidable objections againſt the inſpiration of the Bible. This objection I ſhall conſider in another place. Tho' in conſiſtency with themſelves, they have rejected the account of the miracles which attended the conqueſt, they have admitted the narration in general which is contained in the book of Joſhua, as true.

After the death of Joſhua followed the rule of the Judges; which was ſucceeded by kingly government. Towards the decline of the kingdom of Judah the hiſtory of other nations becomes more authentic, and corroborates ſcripture hiſtory. After the Babylonian captivity the hiſtory of the Jews is more and more connected with that of the Aſſyrians, the Perſians, the Grecians, and other nations. The return of the Jews from Babylon happened about five hundred and thirty-ſix years before Chriſt. The account given of it by Ezra and Nehemiah, whoſe books the deiſts allow to be genuine, confirms the truth of the predictions of Jeremiah and other prophets to whom were diſcloſed the captivity and return of the Jews, before either of thoſe events took place. Beſides, the writings of Ezra and Nehemiah refer to all the hiſtorical books which relate to the children of Iſrael, from

the time of Abraham to the days in which they lived. Thus we ſee that the Old Teſtament hiſtory is eſtabliſhed beyond all reaſonable doubt.

In whatever light infidels are diſpoſed to conſider the Jewiſh prophets who lived before the Babylonian captivity, in the time of it, or afterwards, they cannot deny that ſuch perſons exiſted, without executing a taſk which they have never attempted, and that is the overthrow of the whole hiſtory of the Old Teſtament. The prophecies and the hiſtorical books are ſo interwoven that they muſt ſtand or fall together.

The difficulties which ariſe from the dates and numbers in the Old Teſtament, are not many; and the few miſtakes in theſe particulars are eaſily accounted for. It would be ſtrange if the tranſcribers of the bible, a book much oftener copied than any other in the world, had in no inſtance erred. The Jews, as well as all the other ancient nations, made uſe of letters to expreſs numbers. The figures in arithmetic, with which we are ſo familiarly acquainted, are not to be found in the writings of antiquity. They were firſt introduced into Europe from Arabia, about a thouſand years after Chriſt. Several of the letters of the Hebrew Alphabet are very

much alike in ſhape. A tranſcriber might eaſily miſtake one letter for another, where the ſimilarity between them is very great. An error of this kind might make a numerical calculation very wide from the truth. The Hebrew letter which ſignifies 4, differs very little in its ſhape from the one which ſignifies 200; and the one which ſtands for 8, from the one which ſtands for 400. The errors in copies of the ſcriptures that are of the numerical kind, do nothing towards deſtroying the truth of theſe writings. It has never been contended that the tranſcribers or printers of the Bible, were under immediate unerring ſupernatural influence. Chronological errors, eſpecially in things of ſmall conſequence, have never been conſidered as ſubverſive of profane hiſtory. There is no juſt cauſe why any thing ſhould operate as a valid objection againſt the truth of the ſcriptures, which is conceded to have no weight in ſetting aſide the truth of any other writing. It may be fairly concluded from the perfections of God, that he will preſerve the eſſentials of any book that has a juſt claim to inſpiration. What need we more?

WITHOUT dwelling any longer upon the truth of the Old Teſtament, I ſhall only obſerve, that when it was cloſed by the proph-

et Malachi, about four hundred years before Chriſt, the Jewiſh church received as authentic the ſame books which we have now in our Bible; and admitted no other as canonical.

As we come down to the New Teſtament, we fall within a more luminous period than that of Moſes and the prophets.

We are witneſſes of the exiſtence of the chriſtian religion. However much this may have been, or is now, deſpiſed, no writer has undertaken to overthrow the belief that a perſon called Jesus Christ, made his appearance in Paleſtine near 1800 years ago, and that he has had followers in the world, from the time of his entrance on his public miniſtry down to the preſent day. The Roman Empire had reached its zenith, and human ſcience had riſen to a higher pitch than in any former period when Jeſus was born. There are now in many hands the writings of poets, orators, and hiſtorians, who flouriſhed a little before and a little after his birth. Theſe authors are held in high repute by thoſe who have a taſte for the fine arts; and the reading of them continues to form a part of a univerſity education. Evidence can be collected from ſome of thoſe eminent performances, in ſupport of the truth of the chriſtian ſcriptures.

A QUESTSON may arise in this place, in some minds, which demands an answer, and that is, why the testimony of pagans is appealed to in defence of the gospel? To this it may be answered, that their testimony, is the testimony of avowed enemies; which according to common sense, and the approved rules of judging, has no small weight. The Heathens cannot be suspected of attempting to build up a cause which they have ever sought to destroy; or of aiding in the establishment of the facts on which it rests, unless compelled to it by the force of evidence. Let it also be remembered here, that the suffrages of pagan writers are not collected to prove that the scriptures are given by divine inspiration, but for the single purpose of confirming their truth.

THAT the religion of Jesus Christ did exist in as early a period as his followers contend, may be fairly gathered from the writings of Tacitus, the Roman historian, which were published about seventy years after Christ's death. Speaking of the fire which happened at Rome about thirty years after the crucifixion, and of the suspicions that the Emperor Nero enkindled it, he proceeds as follows: "But neither these exertions, "nor his largesses to the people, nor his

" offerings to the gods, did away the infa-
" mous imputation under which Nero lay,
" of having ordered the city to be ſet on
" fire. To put an end therefore to this
" report, he laid the guilt, and inflicted the
" moſt cruel puniſhments upon a ſet of peo-
" ple, who were held in abhorrence for
" their crimes, and called by the vulgar,
" *Chriſtians*. The founder of that name
" was Chriſt, who ſuffered death in the
" reign of Tiberius, under his procurator
" Pontius Pilate. This pernicious ſuperſti-
" tion, thus checked for a while, broke out
" again; and ſpread, not only over Judea,
" where the evil originated, but through
" Rome alſo, whither every thing bad upon
" earth finds its way, and is practiſed. Some
" who confeſſed their ſect were firſt ſeized,
" and afterwards by their information a vaſt
" multitude were apprehended, who were
" convicted, not ſo much of the crime of
" burning Rome, as of hatred to mankind.
" Their ſufferings at their execution were
" aggravated by inſult and mockery, for
" ſome were diſguiſed in the ſkins of wild
" beaſts, and worried to death by dogs—
" ſome were crucified—and others were
" wrapped in pitched ſhirts, and ſet on fire
" when the day cloſed, that they might ſerve

" as lights to illuminate the night. Nero
" lent his own gardens for these executions;
" and exhibited at the same time a mock
" circensian entertainment, being a spectа-
" tor of the whole in the dress of a chari-
" oteer, sometimes mingling with the crowd
" on foot, and sometimes viewing the spec-
" tacles from his car. This conduct made
" the sufferers pitied; and tho' they were
" criminals, and deserved the severest pun-
" ishment, yet they were considered as sac-
" rificed, not so much out of a regard to
" the public good, as to gratify the cruelty
" of one man."*

That Tacitus was a bitter enemy to the christian religion no one can doubt who has attended to the foregoing passage. It will follow of course that this learned pagan adversary, would have rejoiced at an opportunity to have proved it to be a fable, had it been possible. His testimony in support of some of the principal facts on which it rests, could have been extorted by nothing but irresistible evidence. We observe that he testifies that there was such a person as Christ, that he suffered death in the reign of Tiberius, and under the particular government

* Paley's view of the Evidences of Christianity, Boston Edition, pages 33, 34.

of Pilate. He alſo confirms the account given in the New Teſtament of the temporary check of the prevalence of the goſpel, of the ſpread of it afterwards in Judea, the original or firſt ſpot where it was propagated, and of its extending its influence to Rome; where a chriſtian church was gathered in the ſame age in which Chriſt was crucified.

To the teſtimony of Tacitus might be added that of ſeveral other pagan writers. I ſhall only add that of Pliny the younger, the Roman Governor of Bythynia and Pontus, places remote from the capital. His famous letter to Trajan the Emperor, was written about the ſame time with the paſſage adduced from Tacitus; but relates to the affairs of his own time. He ſpeaks of the chriſtian religion, as a religion well known, and as having made very extenſive progreſs in the places under his immediate government. Speaking of the chriſtians, he ſays, "There are many of every age, and of both "ſexes—nor has the contagion of this ſu-"perſtition ſeized cities only, but ſmaller "towns alſo, and the open country."*

PLINY in the ſame letter mentions the worſhip of the chriſtians, and gives explicit

* Paley's view, p. 36.

teſtimony to the purity of their morals. He writes, "That having examined the chriſ-"tians, ſetting aſide the ſuperſtition of their "way, he could find no fault; and that "this was the ſum of their error, that they "were wont to meet on a fixed day, before "light, and ſing a hymn to Chriſt as God, "and to bind themſelves by a ſolemn oath "or ſacrament, not to any wicked purpoſe; "but not to ſteal, nor rob, nor commit a-"dultery, nor break their faith, nor detain "the pledge."

It is natural to inquire what teſtimony has been given to the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt, and the progreſs of his religion, by the Jewiſh nation, from which he deſcended as a man. According to the Evangeliſts Chriſt's perſonal miniſtry was almoſt wholly confined to that people, and by their influence he was condemned to die. It is certain that the Jews ever ſince the coming of Jeſus of Nazareth into the world, have admitted that he was born in the days of Herod the great—that he entered upon his public miniſtry in Judea—that he did many wonderful things—that he gained a number of diſciples—that by the inſtigation of their rulers he was put to death—that according to the report of his followers he was reſtored

to life on the third day after his crucifixion —and that his religion had an early and extenſive ſpread. The body of the Jewiſh nation did not receive him as the Meſſiah; for they expected, and ſtill expect, a temporal prince under that character. They believed, in the days in which Jeſus appeared, that if he were the promiſed Shiloh, he would have brought them out from under the Roman yoke, and have raiſed their nation to the ſummit of earthly glory. The Saviour whom chriſtians acknowledge, declared, both by words and actions, that his kingdom is not of this world; and condemned in a pointed manner, the reigning corruptions in the faith and practice of the Jews. They rejected this illuſtrious meſſenger of the Lord of hoſts, they charged him with caſting out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils, and purſued him with implacable malice and rancour until they had brought him to the croſs. We are not therefore to expect honorable mention of Jeſus Chriſt or of his religion by them. Some indeed of the modern Jews acknowledge that the chriſtian Meſſiah inculcated many good moral precepts, and juſtly reproach many of his profeſſed followers with a total want of his ſpirit; but they conſider him ſtill as an im-

poſtor. On the whole, we can collect as much evidence from the Jewiſh nation in favor of the early exiſtence of the chriſtian religion, as could under all circumſtances be expected; allowing it to be true.

When we recur to the whole ſeries of chriſtian writers, from the beginning of the chriſtian inſtitution down to the preſent time, we find that they all proceed upon the general account, which is contained in our ſcriptures, and upon no other. The ordinances of Baptiſm and the Lord's Supper, and the Sabbath, have been kept up in the chriſtian church from the time of the Apoſtles to the day in which we live. The few exceptions found among ſmall and temporary ſects of chriſtians, do not affect the general argument, or the uſage of the church at large. The foregoing rites conſidered in this connexion, afford no ſmall proof of the facts which they recognize; ſuch as the death and the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt, as ſet forth in the hiſtory of the New Teſtament. We juſtly conſider the declaration of the Independence of the United States of America, as a great and memorable event. Should the day on which it was declared, be marked with peculiar public tokens of reſpect from generation to generation, will

not evidence be fairly collected hundreds of years hence, by those who shall then live, that the political birth of our republic happened on the 4th of July 1776? The application to the subject which this supposition is designed to illustrate, is too plain to be misunderstood.

In further confirmation of the truth and authenticity of the books of the New Testament, we find the four gospels written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and the Acts of the Apostles, are quoted, or plainly alluded to, by a succession of christian writers, beginning with those who lived in the same age with the Apostles, and continuing through all the subsequent periods to the present time. By the works of those writers it appears that the story of the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Christ, and the effects that soon followed, was the same from the first as now. Quotations from the early ages of the christian church, have been made from the Epistles as well as from the historical books of the New Testament. Whoever receives the historical books as authentic and genuine, cannot justly doubt concerning the Epistles; for the latter proceed on the supposition of the truth of the former: as must appear to

every one who attentively reads the New Teſtament. Its hiſtorical books are quoted, or plainly alluded to, by Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp, as we find by their writings that have come down to us. Thoſe fathers, as is generally admitted, were cotemporary with the Apoſtles, and were the hearers and companions of ſome one or more of the twelve. In the ſecond century from the birth of Chriſt, we collect teſtimony of the kind now under conſideration from the writings of Juſtin Martyr, Irenœus, Theophilus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian. In the third century, quotations from, and references to, the New Teſtament, are numerous in the chriſtian writers of that period: among whom are to be enumerated Origen, Dionyſius, and Cyprian. As we advance far into the fourth century, we find the books written by chriſtians to be as full of ſcripture paſſages, as the printed ſermons of modern divines; it is therefore unneceſſary to name any more chriſtian writers under this head. If we be ſatisfied by the teſtimonies in ſupport of the truth and authenticity of the New Teſtament, that can be adduced from the firſt three centuries, we ſhall find nothing to perplex our belief in the ages that have followed.

THE force of the teſtimony which has been brought, is greatly ſtrengthened by the agreement of the ſeveral writers with each other, in their references to the books of the New Teſtament. They alſo refer to thoſe books as clothed with *divine* authority, and conſider the ſcriptures as the *only* writings which are given by inſpiration of God. If it ſhould be ſaid that the writers of the ſecond century were kept from contradicting themſelves, or others, in quoting from the New Teſtament, by attending to the quotations made by the writers of the firſt century, and that the writers of the third century obſerved the ſame precaution it may be obſerved. 1ſt. That ſuch an agreement in a forgery, if the goſpel be falſe, among ſuch numbers, in places ſo remote from each other, and for three hundred years, is without a parallel in the annals of mankind; and ſince no miraculous evidence is appealed to for the proof of ſuch an unprecedented fact, the objection has no weight. 2d. The chriſtian writers of the firſt century lived in countries remote from each other. Clement flouriſhed at Rome, Ignatius at Antioch, and Polycarp at Smyrna.

THE identity or ſameneſs of the chriſtian ſtory, in every age ſince it was firſt promul-

gated, may be fairly concluded from the early collection of the books of the New Teſtament into a diſtinct volume, and the uſe that was made of them. They were publicly read and expounded in the religious aſſemblies of the chriſtians who lived in the early ages. Commentaries were written upon them; and they were tranſlated into different languages. Attempts were alſo made in the infancy of the chriſtian church, to reconcile with each other the different accounts of the four evangeliſts, as recorded in the copy which we have in our hands.

The uſe that was made of the New Teſtament, in the controverſies that aroſe early in the chriſtian church, tends to the confirmation of the ſubject we are now conſidering. The ſeveral parties appealed to the ſame writings for proof of their reſpective opinions. Moſt even of the heretics acknowledged the whole of the New Teſtament; and the few who did not, received the greater part of it as true, and of divine original. It is eaſy to ſee that the different opinioniſts who had a reſpect for the ſame ſcriptures, to which they had equal acceſs, would ſerve as a check upon each other, againſt attempting any alteration of thoſe writings, had they been ſo diſpoſed. We argue with certainty in this

caſe, becauſe we build upon the known feelings of human nature. To render the matter plain, let us come down to controverſies among chriſtians with which we are acquainted. Should the Preſbyterians attempt an alteration of thoſe texts which the Epiſcopalians employ in ſupport of their cauſe, the latter would not fail to detect and expoſe the fraud. The ſame remark may be made with reſpect to the vigilance of the Preſbyterians, in caſe the Epiſcopalians were guilty of the like fraudulent conduct. Were the Pedobaptiſts, or thoſe who hold to infant Baptiſm, to add to, or diminiſh from, the words in the Bible, on which the controverſy between them and the Baptiſts turn, the latter would hold up the deſigned deception to the world. Were the Baptiſts to alter the diſputed paſſages, the Pedobaptiſts would expoſe the forgery, or eraſement. What ever evils have flown from the diviſions in the chriſtian church, we diſcern that good has come out of them in this one reſpect at leaſt—The preſervation of the ſacred volume from being corrupted.

In this connexion we may ſee, that a ſatisfactory anſwer can be given to the following inquiry, which we ſometimes hear, "How ſhall illiterate people know that the

" preſent copies of the Bible, in the original " tongues in which they were written, or " in the tranſlation which they have are juſt? " As they have no knowledge of thoſe an- " cient languages, how do they know but " that they are deceived about the text?" To this it may be replied—that perſons who are unacquainted with the languages in which the ſcriptures were firſt written, have no juſt cauſe to fear that any material errors have crept into the Hebrew or Greek copies, or into their tranſlations; becauſe learned men of various denominations, and who are, ſome of them, very wide apart in ſentiment, appeal to the ſame ſcriptures in their original tongues; and conſtantly ſerve as ſpies upon each other againſt any alteration of moment, either in the tranſcribing or tranſlating of them. The preſent tranſlation of the Bible into our language, is acknowledged by learned men of different denominations, to be done with great judgment and impartiality. The few who have wiſhed to raiſe an outcry againſt it, have not been highly reſpected by chriſtians in general, for their attachment to revealed religion. The preſent tranſlation was finiſhed almoſt two hundred years ago.

It is indeed true that a knowledge of the languages in which the ſcriptures were firſt

written, will be helpful in underſtanding them; becauſe the tranſlators were not wholly clear from miſtakes; and more eſpecially becauſe there are idioms in every language, or peculiar forms of ſpeech, that cannot be completely expreſſed in any other. But the Bible is ſo tranſlated, that no one will be led into any material error by the preſent verſion.

Returning from digreſſion, I proceed to obſerve that the ſame hiſtorical books of the New Teſtament, which we have in our hands, were early attacked by the adverſaries of our religion; as by Celſus, in the ſecond century, Porphyry, in the third, and Julian the apoſtate, in the fourth. Theſe learned pagans do not hint at any other hiſtories as received among chriſtians, concerning the life, miniſtry, death, and reſurrection, of Jeſus Chriſt, and the propagation of his religion, but thoſe contained in the four Evangeliſts, and in the Acts of the Apoſtles. Their violent enmity to the chriſtian religion, would have led them to deſtroy or weaken the authenticity of the books which its friends received, had it been in their power. As they never attempted this, but built their objections on the ſame books

which are contained in our copies, the evidence is conclusive that the historical records to which christians appealed then, were the same which we now have.

To the foregoing arguments may be added—that many formal catalogues of authentic scriptures were published within four hundred years from the birth of Christ, by his followers, which contain all the books both of the Old and New Testament, that are received by christians, as canonical at the present time.

It is well known to all who have gone far into the inquiry concerning the truth and authenticity of the New Testament, that many spurious or apocryphal writings appeared in some of the early ages of christianity, under the names of the Evangelists, Apostles, and other persons. Such fictions may be accounted for, from the fondness of the human mind to enlarge on a marvellous story that had begun to engage general attention in many places, and from lucrative motives. We have certain proof that those forgeries were never received by the christian church as canonical. They did not appear in the first century from the birth of Christ; in which all the historical books of the New Testament were universally known

and received by chriſtians. Primitive chriſtians never appear to have had any doubt concerning the truth and genuineneſs of the four Evangeliſts, and the Acts of the Apoſtles, which contain the principal facts on which the goſpel reſts. Of the apocryphal writings few have been preſerved entire to the preſent time. From theſe, as well as from the fragments of the reſt to be collected from other writers, thoſe ſpurious productions, the moſt of them, are diſcovered to be full of trifling, ſilly ſtories and contradictions, and to be compoſed in a very different ſtyle from the books which chriſtians receive. It is however apparent from all thoſe forgeries, that they allude to the ſame general hiſtory of Chriſt and his Apoſtles which is contained in the New Teſtament. None of the apocryphal writings were ever admitted into the ſame volume with the canonical books, nor into the catalogues of authentic ſcripture that have been publiſhed. They were not noticed by the adverſaries of the chriſtian religion in its infancy, nor were they appealed to, as an authority, by any of the ancient chriſtian writers, in their controverſies with each other.*

* The reader who wiſhes to go into a full examination of the truth and authenticity of the New Teſtament, is referred to the authorities which have principally guided the

THE differences in the accounts given by the Evangelists concerning the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ create no objection to the truth of their history. Some circumstances are mentioned by one Evangelist which are omitted by another; but on examination it is found that they are all consistent with the general story, and with each other. Differences in history are not necessarily considered as contradictions. Two or more writers on the American Revolution, may mention different facts, and yet their narrations may be harmonious. The genealogies of Christ given by Matthew and Luke are different; but they are reconciled with truth, by considering that Matthew gives the genealogy of Christ in the line of Joseph his reputed father, and Luke traces it in the line of Mary his real mother. The differences in the accounts given by the Evangelists of the Resurrection of Christ, are reconcileable with each other.

THE evidence of the truth of the historians of the New Testament is greater, than if they all had mentioned the same facts and

writer of these discourses, on that subject, viz. Jones's new and full method of settling the canonical authority of the New Testament, and Paley's view of the Evidences of Christianity. The author regrets that he has not had access to Lardner's Credibility of the gospel history.

no other. In that case it might have been objected with more appearance of plausibility, that they wrote in concert with a design to make out one story, to impose on mankind. When a number of witnesses testify to a complicated fact, before a court of justice, precisely in the same words and with the same circumstances, a suspicion more easily arises in the minds of the Judges, of collusion and fraud in the persons who give testimony, than when they employ different words, and bring up different circumstances that are reconcileable with the general fact, and with each other, and cast light upon the whole affair.

If any will be so absurd as to discredit the Evangelists because they narrate events that happened long ago, they must, to be consistent reject all ancient history. They must disbelieve that there ever were such men as Cyrus, Alexander the great, or Julius Cesar; for if their existence be admitted, credit must be given to some of the records of ancient times. We all admit many things to be true of which we have not been eye-witnesses, on human testimony. If the witnesses be credible, we do not withhold our assent to what they testify because the facts they affirm happened a time, or in a place, re-

mote from us. If we will allow nothing to be true that has not been immediately addreſſed to our ſenſes, our knowledge will be confined within very narrow bounds indeed.—We of this audience, on that ſuppoſition, ought not to believe that there are ſuch places as London, Paris, or Amſterdam; for we have not beheld them with our own eyes.

Infidels, in ſome of their objections againſt the Bible, have fallen into modes of reaſoning relative to facts, which they would be aſhamed to adopt when applied to any other ſubject. Hence, we have grounds to ſuſpect that they are governed by a wiſh to prove the ſcriptures to be falſe, rather than by the candor which they profeſs to take for their guide. They urge the ſupernatural events narrated in ſacred hiſtory as a ſufficient bar againſt admitting its truth. Mr. Hume, a deiſt of great ſubtilty, has labored to prove that experience is the only guide, to be relied on, in reaſoning concerning matters of fact. If he mean by experience, what falls under each man's particular obſervation, he muſt go all the abſurd lengths of diſcrediting the exiſtence of every thing which is not known either by the immediate teſtimony of the external ſenſes, or the

immediate perceptions of the mind. If Mr. Hume acted upon his own scheme in the sense in which it is now taken, he certainly did not believe in any part of ancient history, except in things daily occurring; such as the rising and setting of the sun, the ebbing and flowing of the tide, the change of the seasons, &c. Nor did he expect that the readers of his history of England, would give credit to a large part of it, unless governed by the credulity which he explodes. If by experience be meant the usual course of events, it will follow that no report which relates to an uncommon event ought to be believed. On this hypothesis, we have no sufficient grounds to believe that King Charles I. of England, was beheaded in the year 1649, or that Louis XVI. of France lost his life on the scaffold in 1793. It has not been usual for kings to lose their lives by the hand of the executioner, after the formalities of a law trial; and as we were not present when either of those monarchs is said to have had his head struck off, we are justified in rejecting the report as a fable. Such absurd consequences as these will follow from the principles laid down by the most subtle deists, for the purpose of destroying the credibility of miracles. If the existence of these is inadmissible, the Bible

muſt be renounced as given by divine inſpiration

THE portion of underſtanding which is ſo equally diſtributed among mankind, is fully competent to decide on the evidence derived from facts which take place before their eyes. None of the intricacies of abſtract reaſoning are needed in ſuch caſes. This remark agrees with the known ſenſe of all judicial bodies on the earth. To the ſame common ſenſe I appeal, whether the Apoſtles and other witneſſes of the facts recorded in the hiſtory of the New Teſtament, were not competent judges of the truth of what they aſſert? If they were, their teſtimony is to be received as valid; unleſs it can be ſet aſide from ſomething that appears in their characters, or in the circumſtances which attend their narration. No juſt objection can ariſe from either of theſe quarters, when we candidly attend to the caſe. The truth of the ſcriptures is fully eſtabliſhed by admitting, as all men do when not bewildered by ſophiſtry or prejudice, that credible human teſtimony is the ſole criterion of the truth of facts otherwiſe unknown. By this plain and approved ſtandard, we are willing that the truth of the ſcriptures ſhould be tried—We need not fear the reſult.

THE candor and impartiality of the writers of the New Teſtament, are too manifeſt to be denied. They narrate their own faults, without endeavoring to palliate them. This exonerates them from the charge of attempting to impoſe a forgery on the world. To this they had no inducement. The religion they publiſhed condemns falſehood in the ſtrongeſt terms, and dooms liars and deceivers, in particular, to eternal miſery. But had they been ſo hardened, as to have been in no fear from the judgment to come, they had no temporal inducement to ſupport their zeal for the propagation of the goſpel: for by becoming the open advocates of it, they had to renounce the pleaſures, the riches, and the honors, of the world, and expoſed themſelves to meet death in its moſt dreadful forms. But after all, had they been diſpoſed to deceive mankind with a falſe ſtory, it would have been wholly impracticable under the exiſting circumſtances. They publiſhed their hiſtory on the ſcene of action—they appealed to public facts—and they made the appeal while the facts were recent. Their enemies, who had both knowledge and power, would have unveiled the plot, had their ſcheme been built on a lie. The rulers of the Jewiſh nation were, as a body, wholly oppoſed to chriſtianity, and would have

cruſhed it in the birth had their malice been able to have accompliſhed its wiſhes. Had the religion of Jeſus been a fraud, it would ſoon, like other frauds that are deteſted by thoſe in power, have periſhed from the earth. We are not to confine the ſcene to Judea, where chriſtianity was firſt diſplayed, it was carried into the leſſer Aſia, into Greece and Rome and other places, within a few years after the death of its founder. The malice, the learning, and the prejudices of Heathens as well as Jews were exerted againſt it. Its propagation was not in dark and obſcure places, but in the moſt noted places then in the world. It was too in the day when the famous Roman Empire had brought not only Judea, but all countries of much renown, to bow to her arms, and to pour their riches into her treaſury. At the ſame time that ſhe extended her ſceptre over the world, ſhe reigned miſtreſs of the arts. "At the "time when Chriſt appeared, the Roman "Empire had reached the very meridian "of its glory. It was the illuſtrious peri- "od, when power and policy receiving aid "from learning and ſcience, and embelliſh- "ment from the orators and the poets, "gave law to the world, directed its rage, "and even controled its opinions. It was "the age when inquiry was at its height and active

" on every ſubject that was ſuppoſed to be " of curious or uſeful inveſtigation, wheth- " er in the natural or in the intellectual " world. It was, in ſhort, ſuch an age " as impoſture muſt have found in every " reſpect the leaſt auſpicious to its deſigns; " eſpecially ſuch an impoſture as chriſtian- " ity, if it had deſerved the name."*

THE firſt planting of the goſpel in the world, and its prevalence for ſo long a time, under all the attending circumſtances, if it were a forgery, would be a greater miracle, than any it claims for its ſupport; and would be without a parallel in the hiſtory of mankind.

* White's Sermons, containing a view of Chriſtianity and Mahometaniſm, in their Hiſtory, their Evidence, and their Effects, p. 133, 134.

DISCOURSE III.

The sense in which all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God explained; and the evidence of its divine original from the nature of the religion which it contains considered.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 16.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

IN the two former discourses from the text, we have attended to the truth of the scriptures of the Old and New Testament. I now proceed,

II. To explain in what sense the phrase *Inspiration of God*, is to be understood when applied to *all scripture*.

By *inſpiration* is to be underſtood, either an immediate communication of facts or doctrines from God, to the minds of the men who were employed in delivering the Bible to mankind, or in directing them what to write, or in ſecuring them from error. They had facts and doctrines communicated to them immediately from God, in ſome inſtances, as much as if it were now communicated to us what is tranſacting, this moment, at the diſtance of thouſands of miles from us. Whenever they wrote any part of ſcripture they were directed from on High what to record, and at the ſame time they were ſecured from error in what they wrote to guide the faith and the practice of mankind. That part of ſcripture which does not fall under inſpiration in the firſt ſenſe that has been given, falls under it in the two laſt ſenſes; and hence it may be ſaid with ſtrict propriety, *that all ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God*, and forms an infallible rule of faith and practice.

The meaning of inſpiration firſt given, will be eaſily underſtood by a few examples. To Noah was immediately revealed that a deluge would come upon the earth—To Abraham, that his ſeed ſhould be afflicted by a people in whoſe land they ſhould be a

ſtranger, four hundred years—To Moſes, the deliverance of the Iſraelites from their Egyptian bondage by his hand—To Samuel, the overthrow of Saul, and the eſtabliſhment of David on the throne of Iſrael—To Jeremiah, the ſeventy years captivity of the kingdom of Judah—To Paul, the Anti-chriſtian apoſtacy—And to John, the duration of the reign of the man of ſin, and the principal events relative to the church to the end of the world. Inſpiration, in this high ſenſe, is not only employed in revealing facts but doctrines; ſuch as the mode of the divine exiſtence, the character and offices of Jeſus Chriſt, the immortality of the ſoul, the future judgment, and the reſurrection of the dead. Under this head may alſo be ranked poſitive precepts, or inſtitutions; whether binding on the Jewiſh or the chriſtian church.

Those who acknowledge the exiſtence of God, will not deny the poſſibility of his communicating truth to the human mind in this extraordinary manner; whether by viſions, by an audible voice, or in any other way. No perſon demands credit from others, as having ſuch immediate intercourſe with the Deity, unleſs he evidence his illumination by means as extraordinary as the

way in which he received his knowledge. Hence, we may see the importance of miracles to confirm the divine original of the Bible; as will hereafter be considered. We may be under as real obligation to receive as divine what is revealed immediately to others, as tho' it were revealed in the same way to us. The evidence that God hath commissioned others to speak in his name may be so conclusive, as to leave us without excuse in unbelief. Whether the Most High speak to us without, or through, the instrumentality of creatures, his voice is the same, and his authority is equally binding. His right to be obeyed is not founded on the manner of communicating his will, but in his nature, and in our relation to him. Whenever we have certain proof set before us, that the righteous Lord of heaven and earth commands our faith or obedience, we are forbidden to withhold our homage a single moment.

In defining inspiration it was observed, in the second place, that the men who penned the scriptures were directed by God what to write. I need make no exception here for such instances as that of Baruch, and others, employed by the inspired [illegible] scribes; because these last were [illegible]

organs of the men who took them into their service, and pronounced the words which they wrote. If the Prophets, Evangelists, or Apostles, were, in any instance left to their own discretion what to record in the scriptures, these writings could not, with any propriety, be considered throughout as given by inspiration of God; as Paul declares in the text. Besides, if the inspired men were, in any instance, left to their own discretion what to insert in the Bible, we might mutilate it to such a degree, as to render it a very unmeaning book. This has actually been done by some nominal christians. They have professed to believe in the facts and doctrines immediately revealed from heaven; but have considered the subsequent building upon them in the scriptures, as the opinions of fallible men. By treating the sacred volume in this manner, they have brought it down to speak a language which gives very little offence to open infidels. The approach of the former class of persons to the latter is so near, as to render the difference scarcely discernible; and paves the way for their complete union.

In perfect consistency with what has been said, it is admitted, that the Prophets, the

Evangeliſts, and the Apoſtles, might have a knowledge of many things inſerted in the canon, by their own obſervation, and the accounts given them by other men. The revelations made to the patriarchs, and the facts handed down from one generation to another, probably were the ſources through which Moſes was furniſhed with matter for the book of Geneſis. At the ſame time he was directed by omniſcience what to record. This ſuperintending influence of the Holy Ghoſt, gave the ſame authority to what he wrote, as tho' it had been immediately communicated to his mind.

The third ſenſe in which inſpiration is taken, and that is, ſecuring the ſacred penmen from error in what they wrote, is as neceſſary, as the former ones, to give to the ſcriptures the divine authority which they claim, in every thing that relates to our religious faith and practice. Whatever doctrines or laws may be ſuppoſed to have been given by the Moſt High, we can have no ſatisfactory evidence of their divine original, if the men who are ſaid to have recorded them, were not ſecured from error in committing them to writing.

It may be obſerved here, that the infallibility of the ſcriptures is confined to the re-

ligious instruction which they contain. As they were revealed as much for the benefit of the unlearned as the learned, they are not employed in teaching human science, or in correcting errors relative to it. Matters of this kind are but incidentally mentioned, and always for moral purposes. It is wholly foreign to their design to decide on the disputes in natural philosophy or astronomy. They leave these, and similar things, as they find them. They, for instance, speak of the rising and the setting of the sun, in a stile which is familiar to all mankind, and in the same manner which is used, even by those who have gone farthest in the study of the kingdom of nature, at the present day.

It is not contended that the persons who were inspired to write the Bible, were free from sin or error, considered as *men;* for their faults and mistakes stand on the sacred pages. Even a meek Moses offended, during the abode of the Israelites at Kadesh, when he said to them, "must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?" David, who wrote most of the Psalms, committed an atrocious crime in the matter of Uriah. Peter denied his Lord and Master, and at the same time horribly transgressed the third commandment. The other inspired men said

and did enough to convince all who have read their hiſtory, that they were men of like paſſions with others. But, as they were under *the immediate or ſuperintending influence of inſpiration*, they uttered nothing but what is true; either as matter of fact, or doctrine, or warning, or promiſe, or threatning, or is, in ſome way, related to the deſign of the author of the ſcriptures, in giving them to the human race. The ſacred penmen declared facts when they told their own ſins. The evangeliſts are to be credited, when they inform of the diſputes among the Apoſtles, who ſhould be the greateſt in the Meſſiah's kingdom, and of their ignorance of its nature. It is as really the deſign of the Holy Spirit to have the ſins, the follies, and the ignorance, of pious men, expoſed, whether inſpired or not, as to have doctrines and precepts recorded. It will appear, by a little reflexion, that thoſe blemiſhes may be improved to enforce the reproof and the correction named in the text. When we ſee a Moſes, a David, and a Peter, offend, is not the warning of the Apoſtle highly enforced, *Let him that thinketh he ſtandeth take heed leſt he fall?*

THE words and actions of S[illegible] and wicked [illegible] are recorded in th[illegible] ;

to lay open their characters, to justify God in punishing, and to warn against traveling in the path of his enemies. It is declared of the devil, "That he was a murderer from the beginning; and that he is a liar, and the father of it." We find this character exemplified in the history which is given of him. He came with the malicious design of a murderer, to our mother Eve, and with a lie in his mouth, when he said, *ye shall not surely die.* This first lie that was ever told in our world, has often been repeated since; and the tempter still continues to attempt the ruin of the human race by fraud and malice. Is there a false, subtle, a malicious, and a potent, enemy to mankind, constantly going about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour? And is it not worthy of divine wisdom and goodness, to apprise and warn the human race of his destructive design? How can this be done, without giving to us some knowledge of the disposition of the adversary, and the evils he has introduced? It was certainly a high proof of the benevolence and mercy of Christ, when he said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you [illegible] he may sift you as wheat; but I h[illegible] thee, that thy faith fail not."

We have set before us the character of the wicked generation that lived in Noah's time, in Abraham's, and in subsequent ages previous to the coming of Christ, and since; to illustrate the depravity of the human heart, to proclaim the righteousness of God in taking vengeance, and to display the riches of his grace towards the saved. We are moreover warned by such representations against trusting in man, and are counselled to put our trust in the living God. Particular examples of wickedness in persons of different ranks and stations, and some of them under the best external advantages, or under the most solemn admonitions, are adapted to convince us of the obstinacy of sinners, and that the change which is wrought in the renewed is effected by the sovereign mercy of God. A hardened Pharaoh, a blaspheming Rabshakeh, a proud Nebuchadnezzar, a cruel Herod, and a treacherous Judas, stand as so many beacons, to reprove and warn mankind. It is as worthy of infinite truth and purity to delineate such characters, as those of a meek Moses, a pious Hezekiah, a faithful Daniel, a believing Simeon, and an amiable John. When we behold ourselves compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, as sacred history points out to us, we have every inducement

to lay aſide every weight, and the ſin which doth ſo eaſily beſet us, and to run with patience the chriſtian race.

If any will go about to vilify the ſcriptures, becauſe they contain an account of the corruptions of the human race, they betray great ignorance and wickedneſs. Such repreſentations as the Bible contains on this ſubject, are ſo far from fixing a ſtain on the character of Jehovah, that, in the connexion in which they ſtand, they paint his hatred of ſin in the moſt glaring colours. No perſon of an honeſt heart, and who is tolerably acquainted with the ſacred writings, can long remain at a loſs what things are held up in them to be imitated, and what to be avoided. The ſcriptures collectively may be ſtiled *The Word of the* LORD, as they inform us, what the Lord directs us to believe, what to practiſe, and what to ſhun. Their general deſign is the ſame; whether they are delivered in the form of doctrine, precept, or hiſtory.

A LARGE proportion of the Bible is hiſtorical. This form of writing is well ſuited to engage the mind of the reader, as it communicates inſtruction in a pleaſing manner. Of the truth of this every one may be convinced, by reflecting on the effects which he

perceives from liſtening to an intereſting ſtory. Who can avoid being moved in reading the life of Joſeph; the preſervation of Moſes when expoſed on the banks of the river of Egypt, in his infancy; the life of Elijah, and others. The accounts which are given of particular perſons in ſcripture, are not deſigned to amuſe, like a romance; but to afford moral and religious inſtruction. The hiſtory of the birth, life, death, reſurrection, and aſcenſion, of Jeſus Chriſt, compriſes events of greater magnitude, and higher importance, than any other that have been publiſhed in this world.

SCRIPTURE hiſtory confirms the truth of the prophecies, by conducting us to the fulfilment of many of them. It unfolds the happy tendency of piety and virtue, and the miſery that is derived from ſin. By the hiſtory of the Jewiſh nation, in particular, are exhibited the effects of obedience, and of diſobedience, as they reſpect communities. Peculiar as was the form of government under which that people were placed, important inſtructions are given by the divine conduct towards them, to all mankind. The riſe and fall of heathen empires, narrated in the ſacred writings, proclaim the doctrine of divine providence; and announce,

that however nations may be lifted up with their conqueſts and proſperity, they will, ſooner or later, have their reckoning day. The Lord will cauſe the arrogancy of the proud to ceaſe, and will lay low the haughtineſs of the terrible.

The long liſts of names which are found in ſeveral of the ſcripture books, are not without uſe. Among the ſeveral purpoſes anſwered by the inſertion of thoſe catalogues, the two following are obvious, and important: the one is, to confirm the deſcent of all nations from Shem, Ham, and Japheth; the other is, to evince that Chriſt, as concerning the fleſh, deſcended from Abraham, in the line of Iſaac and Jacob, the tribe of Judah, and the houſe of David, agreeably to prediction and promiſe.

Many of the common affairs and occurrences of life are recorded in the Bible. Were all theſe excluded, we ſhould not have evidence, at leaſt in its preſent degree, that the ſacred volume was deſigned for the uſe of mankind. It deſcribes them not only with reſpect to their moral ſtate, and future deſtination, but in their various concerns with the preſent world. Our race, for inſtance, are repreſented in the ſcriptures, as

having need of food for ſuſtenance, and raiment for clothing, ſo long as they remain on the earth. The neceſſity of theſe is not diminiſhed by poſſeſſing the ſpirit of piety, or of inſpiration. God enjoins in his word a temperate and charitable uſe of worldly goods, but he doth not require that abſtraction from them of the living, which can be found only among thoſe who are lodged in the grave. All temporal enjoyments, including natural life, are to be given up, and literally to be parted with, rather than deny Chriſt. At the ſame time it is to be obſerved, that the ſacrifices which are made of earthly bleſſings to indulge a capricious ſanctimony, are not the fruits of evangelical love, but the offspring of pride. Religioniſts have appeared under the chriſtian name, who have repreſented the perfection of piety as very much conſiſting in "neglecting of the body," and in "abſtaining from meats which God hath created to be received with thankſgiving of them who believe and know the truth." The Apoſtle Paul in writing for the cloak that he left at Troas, for the books, and the parchments, ſhows, that as a man he had the ſame wants, and might be benefitted by the ſame outward conveniences, as other men. The inſertion of this paſſage in the ſcriptures, as well as of other

incidents of a like kind, does not appear trifling, after what has been ſaid on the propriety of introducing in the Bible the common affairs of life. It is as really the mind of the author of that ſacred book, that ſuch things ſhould be incidentally inſerted, as thoſe that were immediately revealed from on high.

THERE are ſome things which the ſcriptures declare to be lawful, that may not be expedient under certain circumſtances. To a caſe of that kind the Apoſtle Paul refers in 1 Cor. vii. 6. *But I ſpeak this by permiſſion, and not of commandment.* Under the head of expediency is alſo to be placed the advice of the Apoſtle in the 25th verſe of the ſame chapter, *Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord; yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.* The Apoſtle is here conſidering whether it were eligible for chriſtians to marry while ſuffering perſecution, as they were when he wrote this epiſtle. He gives it as his opinion that it would be better for them to remain in a ſtate of celibacy. He leaves it, however, with individuals to determine for themſelves. As God hath, by a perpetual law, authorized marriage between the ſexes, without the forbid-

den degrees of consanguinity, and where nothing with respect to character forbids, the Apostle could not be commissioned to deliver a prohibitory precept in the present instance. To the Corinthians, who had written to him to inquire whether it were proper that marriages should go on as usual among their members, it was of no less importance to be informed what was left to individual choice, than to know what was positively binding on all in other things. The whole church of Christ is as really instructed by the text under consideration as by any other. Besides, it is foretold in 1 Tim. iv. that, among the apostates in the latter times, there should rise up those who would *forbid to marry*. This prediction has been verified by the decrees of the church of Rome, and of some other nominal christians. The event has therefore shown the importance of a scripture passage, in which an Apostle declares that God never prohibited marriage in times of persecution; but that even in such seasons he has left it to the judgment of individual christians, whether to enter into the matrimonial bond or not. If the foregoing remarks be just, it will follow, that the text in question was inserted in the Bible by the superintending influence of the spirit of inspiration.

When the Apoſtle ſays in the beginning of the 12th verſe, *But to the reſt ſpeak I, not the Lord*, his meaning apparently is, that he was going to deliver ſomething to guide the practice of the church, which had not been before particularly revealed: It is for this reaſon he declares, "ſpeak *I*, not the Lord." That he is ſo to be underſtood, appears from the words which immediately follow in the 12th and 13th verſes compared with the 10th and 11th verſes. The paſſages which ſtand next in order to the clauſe already cited, are, *If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and ſhe be pleaſed to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an huſband that believeth not, and if he be pleaſed to dwell with her, let her not leave him.* On the converſion of a huſband, or a wife, from heatheniſm to chriſtianity, a queſtion naturally aroſe, whether the believer was to renounce matrimonial connexion with his or her unbelieving correlate, as the Jews who had married idolatrous wives, were commanded to do, in the days of Ezra. The Apoſtle forbids divorces on that ground; and the prohibition that he delivers, appears to be clothed with the ſame divine authority as the one named in the 10th and 11th verſes, which contain the follow-

ing words, *And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord. Let not the wife depart from her husband: But, and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.* In this last quotation, the words "not I, but the *Lord*," refer to what Christ had before spoken on the subject of divorce, recorded in Matthew v. 32, and xix. 9. Mark x. 11, 12. Luke xvi. 18. With the thoughts kept in mind which have been suggested in answer to the difficulties, which have arisen from some parts of the seventh chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthian church, it will, I apprehend, be easy to maintain that the whole chapter claims a place in the inspired volume, as much as any other. If the original penmen of the Bible were, in any instance, left to their own discretion what to insert, it will be impossible to defend against infidels, that *all scripture* is given by inspiration of God, as is affirmed in the text. The Prophets, the Evangelists, and the Apostles, when their matter was immediately revealed from on high, or when it was received in other ways, were guided by the Holy Ghost what to write, and were secured from error in writing. I proceed,

III. To bring arguments to prove that all scripture is given by inspiration of God.

THE *first* argument may be taken from the nature of the religion contained in the Bible. In this book the Deity is represented as a spirit, possessed of an eternal, underived, and independent existence; as being every where present at one and the same time; as being infinite in knowledge, and in power, and in every other attribute that is necessary to constitute absolute greatness. JEHOVAH, the God whom christians adore, is not only infinitely great, but infinitely good—He is love. He is the rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he. He is the LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap; he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him: for he spake, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast. He made the world, and all things therein. He hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation

In Him all creatures live, and move, and have their being. The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations. The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south; but God is the Judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another. The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. He is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. He is the one Lawgiver, who is able to save, and to destroy. He hath opened a door of hope to a sinful world through Jesus Christ. By his spirit he forms the hearts of sinners to holiness, and prepares them for eternal glory. He is the Judge of all the earth, and will render righteous retribution to all intelligent accountable creatures, forever.* Doth not such a God deserve the devout and thankful homage of man's heart? "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before

* 1 John iv. 16. Deut. xxxii. 4. Exod. xxxiv. 6. Psalm xxxiii. 6—9. Acts xvii. 24, 26. Psalm ciii. 19. cxiii. 4. lxxv. 6, 7. Dan. iv. 17. 1 Tim. vi. 15. James iv. 12, and many other places.

the LORD our Maker! For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praiſed: he is to be feared above all gods."

THE moral law, delivered from Mount Sinai, conſiſts of ten precepts; the four firſt of which point out our duty to God, and the ſix laſt our duty to mankind. The ſum of the whole is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our ſoul, and with all our ſtrength, and with all our mind; and our neighbor as ourſelves. The ſpirit of this law was binding on man from the creation, and every one of its precepts will remain obligatory upon him for ever. What can be more reaſonable than that an intelligent creature be required to place his ſupreme affections upon that infinite Being, who gave birth to him and all things around him? And preſerves and governs his workmanſhip, and is the ſum of perfection and bleſſedneſs? The other branch of the moral law, which reſpects our neighbor, is built upon truth and equity. The portion of rational moral exiſtence in our fellow-creatures is of as much worth as ours, and deſerves the ſame regard. Beſides, it muſt follow from our ſocial nature, and the neceſſity of its indulgence for our happineſs, that if we are ſtrangers to holy love, we

cannot enjoy ſociety in perfection, or have any of its pleaſures long continued to us.

A CODE of laws was given to the Jews, beſide the ten commandments, reſpecting their peculiar government and worſhip, which was deſigned to laſt only until the time of reformation, or the eſtabliſhment of the New Teſtament worſhip; when alſo the lamp of divine truth was to be carried, as we have ſeen to the Gentile nations. The peculiar inſtitutions given to the Iſraelites under the Moſaic economy, were partly adapted to their uncultivated ſtate: ſuch, for inſtance, was that of the cities of refuge, to provide for the ſecurity of thoſe who might undeſignedly take away the life of any perſon. This inſtitution, however, with many others, was deſigned to teach the neceſſity of an atonement for ſinful man, and of his flying to it as the only way of eſcaping from the curſe of God's holy law. Jehovah taught the children of Iſrael, for a long time concerning the advent of the Meſſiah, and the nature of his kingdom, by types and ſhadows. Particular precepts which may appear to us, under our circumſtances, and at our diſtance of time from their exiſtence, of ſmall moment, were of great importance to that people; as calcu-

lated to keep them distinct from other nations, and to wean them from idolatrous rites, to which they were strongly inclined. We may add, that in all probability, had the Jewish ritual been as simple as the Christian, the Israelites could not have been kept to the observance of it in any tolerable degree, with their general character, without a constant series of miraculous interpositions: But such constant departures from the laws of nature, would, in time, have ceased to excite wonder, and the end for which miracles are wrought, would have been defeated.

We may determine from the conduct of infinite wisdom, that it was not proper that divine revelation should communicate all the light to mankind in the days of Moses, which it has communicated since. The communication of truth was gradual, as appears from comparing the two Testaments together. Light was constantly increasing in the Jewish church, by the rise of new prophets, or the fulfilment of former prophecies, until the Sinai covenant was abolished. Comparatively dark as the ancient dispensation was, which continued for more than fifteen hundred years, every devout worshipper knew, that to obey was better than sac-

rifice ; and that the ſum of duty conſiſts in *doing juſtly, and in loving mercy, and in walking humbly with God.* The Jews were abundantly taught that the Meſſiah would become incarnate, and dwell among men ; and that by his advent light would break forth in greater brightneſs than in any former period. Hence, the woman of Samaria, who believed in the Old Teſtament, ſaid, in her conference with Chriſt, in John iv. "I know that Meſſias cometh, which is called Chriſt : when he is come, he will tell us all things."

The manner in which God is to be worſhipped, as revealed in ſcripture, is pure and rational : and contains an admirable diſplay of infinite majeſty and condeſcenſion. The homage required is adapted to fill the ſoul with holy reverence, and to inſpire it with hope ; "For thus ſaith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whoſe name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him alſo that is of a contrite and humble ſpirit, to revive the ſpirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."*

How apoſtate man may come before the Lord and find acceptance, is a queſtion on

* Iſaiah lvii. 15.

which the light of nature is wholly silent. It is only in the inspired volume that the doctrine of the *atonement*, which hath been made by the Son of God, is revealed. The mediatorial plan was promulgated early after the apostacy of our first parents, even before they were banished from the garden of Eden for their disobedience. In the fulness of time the promised Saviour appeared in the world, made his soul an offering for sin, rose from the dead, and ascended to sit at the Father's right hand. Through him penitent sinners draw near to God, are delivered from the wrath to come, and are made heirs of eternal life. Whatever difficulties attend the expiatory scheme exhibited in the gospel, we may clearly discern in it, the infinite purity and rectitude of God's character and law—his hatred of sin; and the riches of his grace. These prominent features of the scripture doctrine of atonement, declare it to be worthy of the wisdom of the divine mind; and recommend it in the highest manner to our fallen race. It is only in consequence of the interposition of Jesus Christ, that any of mankind have an assured hope of heavenly happiness; whether before or since the actual incarnation of the Son of God: "Neither is there salvation in any

other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

Revelation brings to light the future existence of man, the resurrection of the body, the future judgment, and the portion of the just and the unjust in the world to come. These are solemn truths; suited to deter the wicked, and to encourage the good patiently to continue in well-doing. Nothing stamps value on time—on man's present life, like the eternal state which is to follow; in which each one is to receive from the righteous judge of the living and the dead, according to the deeds done in the body. The punishment threatened to the impenitent is calculated to display the divine holiness and justice; is fitted to their character, and to excite dread. The reward promised to the righteous, corresponds only with the temper of those whose hearts are united with the God of love.

The piety and virtue inculcated in the oracles of truth, breathe a spirit to which the proud and selfish hearts of mankind are wholly opposed. Love to God and man is the root of the graces and virtues, which compose the character that meets the approbation of the infinite mind.

THE man whose piety is evangelical, makes an unfeigned dedication of himself to God; and the feelings of his heart, so far as he is sanctified, fully harmonize with the divine law and government. He approaches his heavenly Father with filial reverence, and can, without reserve, adopt the form of prayer that Christ taught his disciples; "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed "be thy name: Thy kingdom come: Thy "will be done on earth as it is in heaven. "Give us this day our daily bread. And "forgive us our debts as we forgive our "debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine "is the kingdom, and the power, and the "glory, for ever, Amen." This prayer, as one observes, "for a succession of solemn "thoughts, for fixing the attention upon a "few great points, for suitableness to every "condition, for sufficiency, for conciseness "without obscurity, for the weight and real "importance of its petitions, is without an "equal or a rival." The pious man is humble: He feels his absolute dependence on God for good of every kind. He mourns for sin, and begs for pardon through Him who died that sinners might live. While he avoids exercising himself in things that are too high for him, he makes it his study to

know and do the will of God—to maintain sobriety—and to keep alive a devotional temper. Taught that he is not his own, and that he is under the wise, holy and gracious dominion of the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, he denies himself, he endures afflictions with patience, he encounters evils with fortitude, and resigns every enjoyment to Him who guides the faithful through this disciplinary state. Not intimidated by the frowns, nor allured by the flatteries of the world, he, by divine aid, holds on his course till he finishes it with joy. He daily recounts in his closet, in social prayer, and in meditation, the mercies of the supreme benefactor, and is awakened to gratitude and praise. In solitary devotion he shuns the notice of mortals, shuts the door on the noise and business of the world, and prays to his father who is in secret. Modest and unassuming he is far removed from the ostentatious parade of the ancient Pharisees; who professed religion to be seen of men, and chose the corner of the street, to attract the public notice while they recited their forms of devotion. The real disciple of Jesus Christ does not think highly of his own attainments; but in honor prefers his fellow-christians to himself. Knowing that every moral action begins in the heart, he labors to keep it with

all diligence, and is incited to watchfulneſs. Being a conſtant witneſs of remaining inward corruptions, he cenſures himſelf in thouſands of inſtances where he ſtands acquitted in the eyes of mankind.

CHRISTIANITY breathes a kind, meek, and forgiving ſpirit. The heart of him who is under its influence is moved at the cry of diſtreſs, and his hand is open, according to his ability, to ſupply the wants of the poor, and to alleviate the miſeries of the wretched. In almſgiving he does not ſound a trumpet before him, but, as much as poſſible, diſpenſes his benefactions in ſecret. He does not indulge envy, malice, or revenge; but ſtrives to overcome evil with good. He is not under the government of thoſe paſſions which chaſtity forbids, but looks with abhorrence upon them; as unfitting the mind for pure enjoyment, and the inlet of innumerable evils to the human race. In his intercourſe with mankind, he is juſt in his dealings, faithful to his engagements, and the fulfilment of the duties of his particular truſt. He bears on his mind and heart the words of Chriſt, in Matthew vii. 12. *Therefore all things whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them: for this is the law and the*

prophets. The ſpirit of chriſtian virtue tends to the diffuſion of peace and happineſs thro' families, ſocieties, and the great brotherhood of man. How far do the moſt improved in the family of Chriſt on the earth, fall ſhort of the pattern exhibited by his doctrine and example! But imperfect as his followers are, the internal beauty of the goſpel remains; and its influences upon them ſpeak in its praiſe. It is a part of its peculiar glory, to train up men from ſmall beginnings of holineſs to a ſtate of perfect purity and joy.

In a review of the argument in ſupport of the inſpiration of the Bible from the religion it contains, it is natural to inquire whence came ſuch a ſcheme of faith and practice? Where did Moſes and the Iſraelites get ſuch ideas of Deity as are exhibited in the Old Teſtament? They did not derive them from Egypt; for that kingdom was overrun with idolatry during their abode in it. They could not acquire their theology from any of the nations that bordered on Egypt, or Canaan, or from any other then on the earth; for they were all involved in the darkneſs of paganiſm, and remained in that ſtate, until the days of the Apoſtles. Hence, the ſacred writers who followed Moſes could not have been enlightened in the

knowledge and worſhip of the one living and true God, by any men on the earth. It is well known that the heathens hold to a vaſt number of gods. Athens—learned and polite Athens, is ſaid to have acknowledged deities to the number of thirty thouſand. The objects to which pagans have paid divine homage, were, many of them fabricated by art; and to all their gods have been attributed ſenſual appetites, and paſſions, or affections, unworthy of divinity. They are repreſented by thoſe who adore them, as engaged in the amours of the libidinous, and as parties in the quarrels of proud and malicious men. Many of the heathen rituals enjoined the offering of human ſacrifices; and others encouraged drunkenneſs, obſcenity, and whoredom. Some of the wiſer men among the pagans have confeſſed the need of a ſupernatural revelation, to teach mankind how to worſhip the Deity aright. Modern infidels have gloried in the wiſdom of a heathen Socrates. He was indeed one of the moſt deſerving characters that can be found in the annals of pagan antiquity. This renowned philoſopher, "meeting Alcibiades, who was going to the temple to pray, proves to him that he knew not how to perform that duty aright, and that therefore it was not ſafe for him to do

" it ; but that he ſhould wait for a divine " inſtructor to teach him how to behave " both towards the gods and men; and that " it was neceſſary that God ſhould ſcatter " the darkneſs which covered his ſoul, that " he might be put in a condition to diſ- " cern good and evil."* Were Socrates again to appear in the world, with his former belief, he would diſown thoſe as his diſciples, who boaſt of his knowledge, as a proof of the ſufficiency of human reaſon to direct mankind in the duties of piety and benevolence. But to return, I further aſk, whence came the doctrine of the atonement, of the reſurrection, and of the future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, as contained in the ſcriptures? Who communicated the piety and virtue which are deſcribed and recommended in theſe writings? No one who is acquainted with the pagan theology, can, with the leaſt colour of reaſon, pretend that the religion of the Bible was copied from the religion of idolaters. Does the ſpirit of the book, whoſe divine original I am endeavoring to maintain, carry the air of human invention? Good men would not impoſe a forgery on the world for truth.

* Leland's View of deiſtical writers, in 2 vol. page 21th of vol. I.

Bad men could not have a ſingle motive to prompt them to deviſe ſuch a ſcheme of faith and practice: For had they knowledge equal to the taſk, they would not have employed it in the eſtabliſhment of a plan, which expoſes and condemns them in its whole deſign. The drift of all the ſacred books from Geneſis to the Revelation of John, is directly in the face of fraud and every ſpecies of iniquity, both public and private. Beſides, the humble, pious, and diſintereſted, ſpirit of the goſpel, has not one charm to the unholy and the ſelfiſh. To admit that ſuch characters as theſe laſt would invent ſuch a religion, if competent in point of ability, would be as abſurd as to grant, that a malicious man will direct every effort to promote the good of the one he inveterately hates, or that a ſelfiſh man will act from diſintereſted motives, or that a covetous man will make it his whole aim to be liberal.

THERE is no anſwer to be given to the queſtion, whence came the religion contained in the Bible? that can ſatisfy a candid reflecting mind, but this, IT CAME FROM GOD! And therefore the men who announced it to the world, ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt.

DISCOURSE IV.

Objections raiſed againſt the commands for borrowing of the Egyptians, and the extirpation of the Canaanites, anſwered; and the evidence of Miracles conſidered.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 16.

All ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs.

IN the concluſion of the laſt diſcourſe, was introduced an argument in ſupport of the inſpiration of the Bible, taken from the nature of the religion it contains. Againſt its pure and benevolent nature ſeveral objections have been brought. I ſhall, in this place, attend to two, raiſed againſt the morality of certain parts of the Old Teſtament, which are delivered under the ſanction of a divine precept. The difficulties I have in

view, are thoſe which have been ſtarted from the commands which Jehovah gave to the children of Iſrael, to borrow of the Egyptians, and to cut off the Canaanites.

THE firſt of theſe injunctions is recorded in Exodus xi. 2. *Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, jewels of ſilver, and jewels of gold.* The Iſraelites practiſed agreeably to the direction received, on the night in which they left Egypt; as we learn from Exodus xii. 35, 36. "And the children of Iſrael did according to the word of Moſes; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of ſilver, and jewels of gold, and raiment. And the Lord gave the people favor in the ſight of the Egyptians, ſo that they lent unto them ſuch things as they required; and they ſpoiled the Egyptians." It has been ſaid that this conduct is not reconcilable with truth or juſtice, and therefore God could not authorize it as Moſes declares; and that the certain conſequence [illegible] Jehovah, the [illegible] which contains the [illegible] cannot be given by divine revelation. To remove this objection it may be obſerved,

1ſt. THAT the Egyptians had long held the Iſraelites in cruel bondage, and, in point

of juſtice, owed them a large compenſation in property, for their ſervice; and to a higher amount than they actually received.

2dly. The Hebrew verb rendered *borrow*, in the foregoing paſſages, literally ſignifies to *aſk*; and is ſo tranſlated in general.* According to this verſion the difficulty is at once removed. The Iſraelites had certainly an equitable claim on the Egyptians their oppreſſors; and on that ground might aſk of them precious jewels and raiment.

3dly. The difficulty does not appear inſurmountable, if we allow the word *borrow* to ſtand, as in the Bible which we have in our hands. The Iſraelites were not holden, by any engagement of theirs to return the loan, until they ſhould reach Mount Sinai, where they were to worſhip Jehovah their deliverer. But previouſly to their arrival at that place, Pharaoh and his hoſt purſued them with a hoſtile deſign. The Lord interpoſed and cut off the king with his army, by drowning them in the red ſea. The Iſraelites could be juſtified in retaining the jewels and the raiment in their poſſeſſion, as the property of a public enemy. Under the

* Gen. xxxii. 29. Deut. iv. 32. xxxii. 7. Joſhua iv. 6. Judges xviii. 5. 1 Sam. xii. 19. Pſalm ii. 8. Iſaiah vii. 11.

exiſting circumſtances, what they firſt received in a way of loan, became ſpoil, and hence their obligation to return it ceaſed.

4thly. SINCE the earth is the Lord's and the fulneſs thereof, he may transfer his gifts, in an extraordinary, as well as in an ordinary, manner, if he pleaſe. The plagues inflicted on the Egyptians in their own country, and their overthrow at the red ſea, ſerved as ſo many miraculous atteſtations in ſupport of the equitable claim of the people whom they had ſo long oppreſſed, upon their goods; and authorized the redeemed nation in holding the jewels and the raiment, which had been put into their hands. None can juſtly plead the caſe we have been conſidering as a precedent to redreſs their wrongs in the ſame way, unleſs they can produce miracles in their juſtification, as convincing as thoſe that were wrought for the deliverance of the Iſraelites from their Egyptian bondage. The Lord brought them forth with a mighty hand, and with an outſtretched arm, and with great terribleneſs, and with ſigns, and with wonders. The wrath of Jehovah was awfully diſplayed in the puniſhment of the Egyptians. Ruin was ſpread over the face of their land, mourning for the death of their firſt-born

was heard from every houſe, and they were ſpoiled of their choiceſt treaſures. The Lord brought forth his people "with ſilver and gold; and there was not one feeble perſon among their tribes. Egypt was glad when they departed; for the fear of them fell upon them."

I PROCEED to conſider the difficulty ariſing from the command which Jehovah gave to the children of Iſrael, to deſtroy the inhabitants of Canaan. This objection has been accounted the moſt ſpecious of any that has been brought againſt the divine original of the Bible; and has been much inſiſted on by deiſts. They have confidently affirmed, that the Iſraelites could have no juſt authority to go into Canaan, cut off its inhabitants by the ſword, and take poſſeſſion of their country; and that if it be admitted that the Iſraelites had righteouſneſs on their ſide, in thus treating a people at peace with them, it will follow that any nation may deprive another of all that is dear to them as men, without violating the law of benevolence. The enemies of divine revelation have alſo dwelt much on the command for the *total* exciſion of the Canaanites, without reſpect to age or ſex, as breathing a ſpirit of cruelty, and therefore unworthy of God.

I have been the more careful in calling up this objection in its full ſtrength, becauſe of the temporary embarraſſment it has occaſioned in ſo many minds, when they have begun to inquire into the authority of the ſcriptures. To aſſiſt in removing the difficulty, let the following things be conſidered.

1ſt. The character of the Canaanites, whom the children of Iſrael were commanded to deſtroy. From the account given of them in ſacred hiſtory, it appears that they were groſs idolaters, and were addicted to vices of the moſt enormous kind. They conſulted with familiar ſpirits, and practiſed the arts of ſorcery and witchcraft. There was not a crime that agreed with their unbridled luſts, which they did not ſanction by their idolatrous rites. *Even their ſons and their daughters they burnt in the fire to their gods.* They lived in the open indulgence of fornication, inceſt, and the ſin of Sodom. They even defiled themſelves with the beaſts of the field. Hence Jehovah gave the following prohibitory precept to the Iſraelites, "Defile not yourſelves in any of theſe things; for in all theſe the nations are defiled which I caſt out before you. And the land is defiled: therefore I do viſit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itſelf

vomitteth out her inhabitants."* I know not whether it be poſſible to repreſent a nation in a more odious light, than by the figure of their land *vomitting them out*, as too loathſome to endure on its ſurface.

2dly. It is evident from the national character of the Canaanites, that they juſtly deſerved deſtruction from the hand of God. His purity and juſtice forbid the laſting proſperity of a nation of profligates. The Lord did not ſuffer the Canaanites to be deſtroyed, until they had ripened themſelves for ruin by obſtinate wickedneſs. Near five hundred years before their conqueſt by Joſhua, when God renewed the promiſe to Abraham, that his ſeed ſhould poſſeſs their land, he declared that there would be a ſuſpenſion of the performance until ſeveral future generations were paſſed away; and for the following reaſon—*The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*† The righteous Lord did not ſuffer them to be cut off till their ſins had long cried aloud for vengeance. Hence, he cautions his people, as in Deut. ix. 4. "Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath caſt them out from before thee, ſaying, For my righteouſneſs

* Deut. xviii. 12. Lev. xviii. † Gen. xv. 16.

the Lord hath brought me in to poſſeſs this land; but for the wickedneſs of theſe nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee."

3dly. If the Canaanites juſtly deſerved deſtruction from the hand of God, it muſt belong to him to appoint the manner of inflicting it. No one will contend but that the Lord might juſtly have waſted them, both old and young, by ſickneſs, or famine, or have ſunk them by an earthquake; or have deſtroyed them by evils of a ſimilar nature. None can deny that towns and cities have been overthrown in ſuch ways, involving each ſex and every age, without diſcrimination. The heart that murmurs at the providence which orders ſuch events, as being neither conſiſtent with rectitude nor goodneſs, is actuated by the ſpirit of atheiſm.

As the execution of the ſentence againſt the wicked lies wholly in the breaſt of the ſupreme Judge, no reaſon can be aſſigned why He might not employ the arms of the Iſraelites, in cutting off the ancient inhabitants of Canaan. Intelligent creatures are as fully under his direction and control as the material world. Beſides, when the former are uſed as the inſtruments in puniſhing, the tokens of the divine wrath are

conſidered as more explicit and dreadful than when evils come through other channels. When David was directed to chooſe out of war, famine, or peſtilence, the ſcourge to chaſtiſe him for his ſin in numbering Iſrael, he prayed that he might not fall into the hand of man.

4thly. THAT the Iſraelites were commiſſioned by Jehovah to deſtroy the Canaanites, is manifeſt from their hiſtory, after their departure from Egypt to their paſſing over Jordan. The divine miraculous interpoſitions in their behalf, eſtabliſhes their commiſſion beyond all reaſonable doubt; when taken in connexion with the promiſes God made to Abraham, and other patriarchs who deſcended from him, that the land of Canaan ſhould be given to the poſterity of Jacob for an inheritance. From the words of Rahab the harlot, to the two ſpies whom Joſhua ſent to Jericho, it appears that the inhabitants of Canaan expected that the Iſraelites would conquer and poſſeſs their country, from the wonders wrought for their defence in the wilderneſs. Joſhua ii. 9—11. "And ſhe ſaid unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint becauſe of

you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And, as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

No objection can remain against the manner of destroying the Canaanites, after candidly attending to their character and desert, the right of the supreme Judge in appointing the instruments of his vengeance, and the full proof that is furnished in support of the commission given to the Israelites, to cut off those abandoned nations, and to plant themselves in their land.

If any should inquire why the instance we have been considering, may not be plead in favor of the Spaniards in destroying the aborigines of Mexico and Peru, under Cortez and Pizarro, I answer, that it does not appear that those American Indians were equally corrupt with the ancient Canaanites; but on the supposition that they were, the Spaniards never had an immediate grant

from the ſupreme King, of the countries they invaded, nor had they a divine commiſſion to kill or enſlave the inhabitants. Thoſe avaricious Europeans could not produce miraculous evidence in ſupport of their claim, or of the war they carried on to acquire the lands and the gold of the natives; therefore they were guilty of robbery and murder. They could not derive the leaſt countenance from the principles that juſtify the conqueſt of Canaan by Joſhua.

If any ſhould pretend to vindicate the iniquitous traffic in the human ſpecies, that has been carried on for three hundred years paſt, by the command for the exciſion of the Canaanites, let them ſupport their cauſe by miracles as ſtriking as thoſe that were wrought in favor of the children of Iſrael, in the days of Moſes and Joſhua. Let the men who are exploring the coaſts of Africa in queſt of ſlaves, open a paſſage to go on dry ground through wide and deep waters, and arreſt the motions of our planetary ſyſtem, by ſtretching out their hands, or lifting up their voice—I ſay, let them perform theſe or ſimilar miracles in expreſs ſupport of their deſign, or let them deſiſt from carrying miſery and wretchedneſs to thoſe ſhores,

as they would avoid the guilt of man-ſtealing, and of ſhedding innocent blood.

In the deſtruction of the Canaanites, ſolemn warnings were given to the people of Iſrael, and to all other nations to whom the ſcriptures are known, againſt idolatry and vice. Is it not worthy of the holineſs, juſtice and goodneſs of God to give ſuch warnings to mankind? Did he not diſplay his moral perfections by the deluge, and other judgments recorded in ſcripture hiſtory? The mind of Abraham muſt have been deeply impreſſed with a belief in the holy majeſty of Jehovah, when early in the morning in which Sodom and Gomorrah were wrapped in flames, he beheld the ſmoke of the country going up, as the ſmoke of a furnace. The Lord will make ungodly nations to drink the cup of his wrath. Jere. xxv. 31. "A noiſe ſhall come even to the ends of the earth: for the Lord hath a controverſy with the nations; he will plead with all fleſh; he will give them that are wicked to the ſword, ſaith the Lord."

Having attempted to obviate the foregoing objections, I proceed to introduce a *ſecond* argument in ſupport of the inſpiration of the ſcriptures, taken from the miracles which they narrate. To theſe, appeals have

already been made, but their nature and design deserve a more particular consideration; as well as the principal periods of sacred history in which they were wrought.

A MIRACLE is an event contrary to the laws of nature, or the stated course of divine operation, and is addressed to the external senses of mankind. A miracle is as perfectly within the reach of omnipotence, or is wrought with the same ease, as any other thing that is brought into existence. Should the Almighty now command the sun to rise in the west instead of the east, the event would be miraculous, because it is contrary to what are denominated the laws of nature. If water were to ascend a cataract, it would be a reversion of its common course, and therefore a miracle. The miracles recorded in the scriptures, were perceived by those who were present when they were performed, through the medium of their bodily organs. Thus, the appearances and the voice at Mount Sinai, when the law was given, struck the senses of the Israelites. When Christ walked on the sea of Galilee, his disciples were eye-witnesses. No train of reasoning is necessary to convince the spectators when a miracle is performed. Its sudden, extraordinary nature arrests the attention,

like the firſt appearance of a blazing comet, or the noiſe of thunder.

THE apparent deſign of miracles is to ſummon the attention of mankind, to ſome doctrine or duty, revealed or enjoined by Jehovah; and at the ſame time to prove that the perſons who deliver the truths or the laws, are commiſſioned by him. When God ſends meſſengers with ſuch credentials, their meſſage is clothed with his authority, and demands our faith and obedience. Miracles, though moſt ſtriking to thoſe who were preſent when they were wrought, may be ſo well atteſted, as to anſwer the ſame general purpoſes to others down to the end of the world. They were of high and abſolute importance in the eſtabliſhment of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian diſpenſations. To this general deſign may be reduced all the miracles recorded in the Old Teſtament, and in the New.

WE have no reaſon to expect the renewal of miracles; becauſe the canon of ſcripture has long ſince been cloſed. The preciſe period in which miracles ceaſed, I pretend not to determine: But we have no evidence that they were continued beyond the infancy of the chriſtian church.

Let us attend to ſome of the miracles wrought by Moſes. While he was in exile in the land of Midian, where he continued forty years, he led his flock to the back-ſide of the deſert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. To this humble ſhepherd the Angel of the Lord appeared, in a flame of fire, out of the midſt of a buſh; and he looked, and, behold, the buſh burned with fire, and was not conſumed. As he turned aſide to ſee this great ſight, Jehovah called to him out of the midſt of the buſh, and commanded him to go down into Egypt, to deliver the children of Iſrael from their cruel bondage, and to conduct them unto the good land that he had promiſed to give them. Moſes diſcovered great reluctance, at firſt, in entering on the work aſſigned him; and urged that his nation would not believe him, but would ſay, "The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." Jehovah directed him to caſt the rod in his hand on the ground. He obeyed; it became a ſerpent; and he fled from before it. By the ſame authority, he caught it by the tail, and it again became a rod in his hand. He was next commanded to put his hand into his boſom; and when he took it out it was leprous as ſnow. He was ordered to put

his hand into his bosom again; and on his plucking it out the second time, it was cured, and resumed the same appearance with his other flesh. Convinced by these two signs, as well as by other things, of his duty to undertake in the arduous work of delivering Israel from bondage, he with Aaron his brother, went down into Egypt, in obedience to the divine command. It appears from the history recorded in Exodus, that Moses, after his long exile, had given up the expectation which he had entertained forty years before, of delivering the Israelites, and that they were looking out for no such thing. This greatly strengthens the credibility of the story. On the refusal of Pharaoh to release the Israelites from bondage, according to the demand which Jehovah directed Moses to make, Aaron cast down the rod, which had undergone miraculous changes at Horeb, and it became a serpent, in presence of the Egyptian monarch and his ministers. Other miracles were afterwards wrought; in turning the waters of Egypt into blood, in filling the land with frogs, and with swarms of flies, in the plagues of the hail, and the locusts, in bringing on a thick darkness over the land of three days continuance, and to name no more, in the death of the first born, both of man and beast, through-

out the realm, in one night. Theſe miracles, in connexion with thoſe afterwards performed at the red ſea, at Mount Sinai, and other places, until the choſen people were put in poſſeſſion of the land of promiſe, abundantly eſtabliſh the inſpiration of the Old Teſtament. Additional proofs of the ſame kind were afforded, from the conqueſt of Canaan till the days of the prophet Daniel. When Moſes, a little before his death, was exhorting the children of Iſrael to keep the ſtatutes and commandments of the Lord, he reminded them of the extraordinary manner in which God had redeemed them from Egypt, and revealed his will, as high motives for their obedience. He appealed to the ſigns and wonders which had been ſhown and wrought before their nation, in proof that their Almighty Redeemer was the only true God, and that their religion was from him. Deut. iv. 32—40. "For "aſk now of the days that are paſt, which "were before thee, ſince the day that God "created man upon the earth; and aſk "from the one ſide of heaven unto the oth-"er, whether there hath been any ſuch "thing as this great thing is, or hath been "heard like it? Did ever people hear the "voice of God ſpeaking out of the midſt "of the fire, as thou haſt heard, and live?

" Or hath God assayed to go and take him
" a nation from the midst of another nation,
" by temptations, by signs, and by won-
" ders, and by war, and by a mighty hand,
" and by a stretched-out arm, and by great
" terrors, according to all that the Lord
" your God did for you in Egypt before
" your eyes? Unto thee it was shewed, that
" thou mightest know that the Lord he is
" God; there is none else besides him.
" Out of heaven he made thee to hear his
" voice, that he might instruct thee: and
" upon earth he shewed thee his great fire,
" and thou heardest his words out of the
" midst of the fire. And because he loved
" thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed
" after them, and brought thee out in his
" sight with his mighty power out of Egypt;
" to drive out nations from before thee,
" greater and mightier than thou art, to
" bring thee in, to give thee their land for
" an inheritance, as it is this day. Know,
" therefore, this day, and consider it in thine
" heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven
" above, and upon the earth beneath: there
" is none else. Thou shalt keep, therefore,
" his statutes, and his commandments, which
" I command thee this day, that it may go
" well with thee, and with thy children after
" thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy

" days upon the earth, which the Lord thy " God giveth thee, forever."

WHETHER the magicians, mentioned in Exod. vii. and viii. performed real miracles, is a queſtion which has often been brought up in attending to the miracles of Moſes; and has been differently anſwered by divines of high reputation in the Chriſtian Church.

THOSE who adopt the affirmative ſide of the foregoing queſtion, admit that the evidence is eventually full and deciſive in ſupport of the divine miſſion of Moſes; becauſe that the magicians were early confounded in their conteſt with him, and were brought to confeſs that Moſes was furniſhed with divine aſſiſtance. My limits will not permit me to enter largely into this ſubject; I ſhall only ſuggeſt a few reaſons againſt the hypotheſis, that the magicians performed real miracles.

1ſt. IF real miracles are admitted to be wrought on the ſide of thoſe who are engaged for the ſupport of error and wickedneſs, as the ſuppoſed miracles of the magicians in Egypt were, it will be very difficult to ſhow how miracles do in any caſe confirm the divine miſſion of any perſon, or the divine au-

thority of any ſcheme of religion. Nicodemus, in the third chapter of John, appears to have ſpoken not only according to the belief of the Jews, but agreeably to the dictates of the human mind, when he ſaid to Chriſt, *We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do theſe miracles that thou doeſt except God be with him.*

2dly. Moses diſcovers no marks of diſcouragement from any thing that the magicians are ſuppoſed to have done, in turning their rods into ſerpents, water into blood, or in bringing up frogs upon the land. But conſidering his very great diffidence in undertaking the arduous work to which he was called while in Midian, would he not have been greatly agitated, and have been ready to deſpond, if he had believed that the magicians were poſſeſſed of a power to do miracles? How would he have relied on the ſign of changing *his* rod into a ſerpent, as a proof of his divine commiſſion, as the Lord had told him, if the magicians could alſo turn *their* rods into ſerpents?

3dly. Whatever the magicians did, they never went firſt in performing any wonder; but they in their operations always *followed* Moſes. It is certainly much eaſier to imitate than to take the lead, in any thing either

great or rare. Men who compoſed an order of ſuch antiquity and repute among the heathens, as were the magicians, muſt have acquired a dexterity in their art, which far ſurpaſſes any thing that has fallen under our notice.

4thly. It plainly appears to us, even at this diſtance of time and place from the ſcene in Pharaoh's court, that in two of the three inſtances in which the magicians imitated Moſes, they wrought on a much ſmaller ſcale than he did. When Aaron ſtretched out the rod over the waters of Egypt, the Lord cauſed their ſtreams, rivers, ponds, and all their pools to become blood; and they remained in that ſtate ſeven days. The Egyptians, in that time of diſtreſs, opened wells or ſprings to procure water to drink. The magicians could have but a ſmall quantity of water to operate upon. At the inſtant of time when Moſes did his miracle there was no water for them to change, ſo much as in veſſels of wood or ſtone. They might afterwards by their art cauſe the water taken from a newly opened ſpring or well, to aſſume the appearance of blood. It is affirmed by ſome great naturaliſts now living that a ſmall quantity of water may be made to appear red like blood, by the efforts

of art. In the inſtance of the frogs the magicians could do very little; becauſe Moſes had before cauſed them to go up from the waters of Egypt, and to cover the land.

5thly. PHARAOH is conſidered as more criminal for not letting the Iſraelites depart from their bondage, on account of the ſigns and wonders which were ſhown by Moſes and Aaron, even while the magicians imitated their miracles. As a proof of this we need only advert to what is ſaid concerning the Egyptian monarch, that *he hardened his heart*, or that *his heart was hardened*. If the magicians did as real miracles as Moſes, how could Pharaoh's guilt have been increaſed in holding the children of Iſrael in ſlavery, againſt the light reflected upon his underſtanding and conſcience by what Moſes did? What evidence could Pharaoh collect from ſigns, which were performed by thoſe who demanded the releaſe of the oppreſſed people, if his wiſe men who deſigned by their wonderful works to countenance him in his conduct, wrought as real miracles as were performed by Moſes and Aaron? If it ſhould be ſaid that the miracles performed by theſe laſt exceeded thoſe wrought by the magicians, and therefore Pharaoh was the more criminal in refuſing to let Iſrael go, it may

be anſwered, that according to this hypotheſis, there was divine evidence againſt divine evidence; which is abſurd and contradictory. Beſides, if Moſes exceeded the magicians for the preſent, while the conteſt between them continued, how could Pharaoh determine before the trial cloſed, that the latter would not in a future inſtance get the victory over the former? While there was room to doubt, the Egyptian monarch could not be blamed for waiting the iſſue of the conteſt; and conſequently his guilt would not have been increaſed by the miracles of Moſes, during the performance of counter miracles. There appears to be no way to avoid theſe difficulties, but that of denying that the magicians wrought real miracles.

6thly. PHARAOH never applied to the magicians to take away the plagues while they imitated Moſes; but in every inſtance to the latter. He could not be influenced to this conduct by his native inclination or intereſt. How can this behaviour of his be accounted for, except on the ground, that he was compelled to believe that Moſes only was endowed with miraculous powers?

7thly. THE magicians are expreſsly ſaid, in the three inſtances in which they imitated Moſes, to have wrought *with their inchant-*

ments. The original word rendered *inchantments*, in Exodus vii. and viii. is derived from a verb which signifies *to hide*, or *conceal*, and the plural noun derived from it, signifies *incantations*, or *charms*, or *juggling tricks;* whereby true appearances are covered, and false ones are imposed on the eyes of the spectators. The divine law forbids the use of this art; Levit. xix. 26. "Ye shall not eat any thing with the blood; *neither shall ye use inchantment*, nor observe times." The servants of Jehovah did not indulge such operations. Even Balaam, when he found himself compelled to bless the people of Israel, instead of cursing them according to the wishes of his heart, "went not as at other times *to seek for inchantments.*"* From the use of inchantments adopted by the magicians in Egypt, it may be fairly concluded that what they did, was performed by the exertion of their art; and that therefore they wrought no miracle.

8thly. When the magicians failed in their attempt to bring forth lice with their inchantments, they said unto Pharaoh *This is the finger of God;* which confession implies that what they had done before was effected by art. It is to be observed that the mag

* Numb. xxiv. 1.

cians do not say, "This is the finger of *the Lord*, or *Jehovah*," in whose name Moses did his miracles; but that, "This is the finger of *God*." The word translated *God*, in this passage, is applicable to any Deity; as we find from the use of it in the scriptures. It may therefore be inferred, that the magicians themselves acknowledged that there was no special interposition of *Deity* in all which they had done.

If the foregoing arguments are well founded, it must appear unnecessary that the sacred historian should have said in a formal manner, that the magicians in Egypt wrought no real miracle; since the same idea is communicated by the words which narrate their operations—"*They did so with their inchantments.*"

The magicians, and kindred orders of men, might do many strange and marvellous things in the days of Moses, and they may now; but we seem not to have any evidence that God hath ever wrought a miracle by their hands. When Baal's prophets in the time of Elijah made an effort to call down fire from heaven upon their altar, they were not able to accomplish their wishes. When the exorcists, mentioned in Acts xix. undertook to cast out evil spirits by invoking

the name of Jeſus, in connexion with their art, they were dreadfully confounded: ver. 15, 16. "And the evil ſpirit anſwered and ſaid, Jeſus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil ſpirit was, leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed againſt them, ſo that they fled out of that houſe naked and wounded." Antichriſt claims the power of working miracles, but thoſe he exhibits, are ſtiled, in ſcripture, *lying wonders*; not only becauſe they are deſigned to eſtabliſh herefy, but becauſe the facts to which he appeals are not of the miraculous kind: as will fully appear to any one who peruſes the legends of the Romiſh church, together with the writings of the reformers.

HAVING attended to the caſe of the magicians, which is the moſt difficult of the kind recorded in the Bible, I need not pay particular attention to that which is contained in 1 Samuel xxviii. relative to the reſurrection of the prophet by the witch of Endor. She is not to be conſidered as a worker of miracles, if ſome perſon, under the cover of the night was ſubſtituted by her to announce to Saul his deſtiny. This would be wholly the effect of art. Nor can ſhe be ranked among the performers of mir-

acles, if, as is moſt probable, Jehovah interpoſed and raiſed Samuel, to deliver to the wicked king of Iſrael his doom. It is I think, obvious from the hiſtory, that while the witch was about to practiſe the art of divination, the prophet ſuddenly appeared. If this be admitted as fact, ſhe was in no ſenſe employed as an inſtrument in producing the miracle.

The laſt miraculous event in the old Teſtament hiſtory which I ſhall conſider, is the one that was performed in the time of the prophet Elijah: Of this we have a particular account in 1 Kings xviii. That prophet lived in the time when Ahab reigned over Iſrael; a prince who gave himſelf up with Jezebel his wife, to idolatry and wickedneſs, above all who had been raiſed to the throne before him. A drought of more than three years continuance was ſent upon the land, for the wickedneſs of the king and his people; and was followed by a dreadful famine. The prophet Elijah was commiſſioned by Jehovah to denounce to Ahab the withholding of the dew and the rain during that gloomy period. Near its cloſe he came out of his retirement by divine command, and went boldly to meet the king, who had been

seeking to find the place where the prophet was sheltered, that he might put him to death. "And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim. Now, therefore, send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table." Ahab assembled the people and the prophets according to desire. "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, how long halt ye between two opinions, if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." The people manifested by their silence, that they had nothing to say against so reasonable a proposal. "Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them, therefore, give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under; and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. And call ye on the name of your

gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the god that anſwereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people anſwered and ſaid it is well ſpoken." The prieſts of Baal took the bullock which they choſe, and prepared and laid it on their altar. They cried to their god from morning to evening, but there was neither voice, nor any to anſwer, nor any that regarded. Elijah proceeded to repair the altar of the LORD before all the people. He made a trench about it, and laid on the wood and the bullock in order. He commanded water to be poured upon the burnt-ſacrifice and the wood: This was done three times. "And the water ran about the altar; and he filled the trench alſo with water. And it came to paſs, at the time of the offering of the evening ſacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and ſaid, LORD God of Abraham, Iſaac, and of Iſrael, let it be known this day that thou art God in Iſrael, and that I am thy ſervant, and that I have done all theſe things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me; that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou haſt turned their heart back again." The people muſt have waited with anxions deſire to ſee the iſſue—the controverſy decided, whether JEHOVAH or Baal be the true God.

The ſuſpenſe was immediately removed after the prayer of Elijah was cloſed. "The fire of the LORD fell, and conſumed the burnt-ſacrifice, and the wood, and the ſtones, and the duſt, and licked up the water that was in the trench." The people felt the deciſion of the controverſy—They could not doubt for a moment. "They fell on their faces, and they ſaid, THE LORD, HE IS THE GOD! THE LORD, HE IS THE GOD!" In this inſtance we behold in a ſtriking manner, the proof which miracles afford that JEHOVAH is the only true God, and that mankind are under the higheſt obligations to worſhip and obey him, as required in his word.

I PASS to the conſideration of ſome of the miracles recorded in the New Teſtament.

THE number of miracles performed by Jeſus Chriſt was much greater than thoſe which were done by Moſes, or Elijah, or any who came before him. He went about all the cities and villages in the land of Iſrael, healing every ſickneſs and diſeaſe.* "His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought unto him all ſick people that were taken with divers diſeaſes, and torments, and thoſe which were poſſeſſed with devils, and thoſe which were lunatic, and thoſe that had

* Matth. ix.

the palsy; and he healed them."† He cured persons, and that in an instant, who were deaf, and blind, and dumb, and lame. They immediately recovered their hearing, their sight, their speech, and the use of their limbs; and remained in a state of recovery. He removed completely at once, infirmities which had been of many years standing. This is altogether different from curing by the application of medicine; which is very slow in its progress in overcoming chronic disorders. Christ restored soundness to the body, as well as regularity to the mind, by uttering a word. Many such miracles as the foregoing were performed in a public manner, and before enemies. He fed four thousand men, beside women and children, with seven loaves of bread, and a few little fishes; and seven baskets of fragments remained. At another time he fed about five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes; and twelve baskets of fragments remained. He silenced the tempest by his voice, and he walked on the waves of the sea. He restored life to the dead. Three instances are particularly mentioned, viz. the widow's son at Nain, Jairus's daughter at Capernaum, and Lazarus at Bethany. Let us

† Matth. iv. 24.

beſtow our attention for a moment on theſe inſtances.

When Jeſus approached the gate of the city of Nain, with many of his diſciples and much people, he met a funeral proceſſion. A croud had collected to mourn with a ſorrowful mother, in a ſtate of widowhood, whoſe only ſon had fallen a victim to death in the bloom of youth: the corpſe was now moving to the land of ſilence. The compaſſion of Jeſus was tenderly touched, as he beheld the flowing tears of a ſolitary widow, mourning for her only ſon. "He ſaid unto her, weep not. And he came and touched the bier; and they that bare him ſtood ſtill." The attention of the throng muſt have been fixed upon this ſtranger—Their eyes and their ears were open—What doth this traveller deſign! The multitude ſoon heard and ſaw with amazement—He ſpoke with an audible voice, *Young man! I ſay unto thee, Ariſe!* "And he that was dead ſat up, and began to ſpeak. And he delivered him to his mother." The ſpectators felt a ſolemn awe; "and they glorified God, ſaying, that a great prophet is riſen up among us; and, that God hath viſited his people."*

* Luke vii.

JAIRUS, a ruler of the ſynagogue, had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, who lay a dying. He came to Jeſus, who was then ſurrounded by a multitude, and fell at his feet, and with all the diſtreſs and anguiſh which a father feels, when his child appears to be in the agonies of death, beſought him to go to his houſe to ſtay the departing ſpirit. As the great phyſician did not repair to the place ſo ſoon as requeſted, word was ſoon brought him that the maiden was dead, and that he needed not make the viſit lately requeſted. But when Jeſus heard it, he told the meſſenger, that ſhe ſhould be made whole. He went to the melancholy houſe, and found the family weeping and bewailing their dead friend. "He took her by the hand, and called, ſaying, *Maid! ariſe!* And her ſpirit came again, and ſhe aroſe ſtraightway."*

LAZARUS of Bethany, was raiſed from the dead after he had lain in the grave four days. This miracle was wrought in preſence of a great number of ſpectators. They heard the commanding voice of the Son of God, *Lazarus, come forth!* They ſaw him coming forth from the grave. Some who were preſent believed on Jeſus as the prom-

* Luke viii.

ised Messiah; but others went their ways to the Pharisees, and made them acquainted with the miraculous event. Whereupon the Jewish council was assembled; the members of which said to each other "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.—From that day forth, they took counsel together for to put him to death."*

The resurrection of Jesus Christ, is a miracle, which taken in all its circumstances, is the most remarkable of any that was ever wrought in our world, and furnishes the highest evidence of his divine mission, and that the gospel is from God. Jesus showed unto his disciples while he was pursuing his public ministry, that he must go up to Jerusalem, be delivered into the hands of men, suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.†

Had not Jesus Christ risen from the dead, his religion must have early perished. His fate would have been the same with that of the French prophets, a set of enthusiasts who

* John xi. † Matth. xvi. 21. Mark ix. 31.

appeared in England about a hundred years ago. When one of their chiefs lay on his death-bed, and was actually expiring, he told his followers round him that he should rise on a certain day and hour; and that if he failed, they must conclude that they had been deluded. The day came—a vast number of people assembled round the grave—as the hour approached, a noted partisan lifted up his voice, and called to his deceased friend—Rise! Oh rise! or we are undone! But the clods continued to cover the dead body, and the delusion was detected in the eyes of the world. If Christ had not risen, as he predicted, his cause would have sunk. Saith the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. xv. *If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.*

The death of Jesus was not in private among his friends, but in public among his enemies; by whom he was executed as a malefactor. When he was taken down from the cross, his enemies were fully satisfied that he was dead. Life could not have remained in him after the Roman soldier had thrust the spear into his side. His body was lodged in a sepulchre hewn out of a rock, a stone was rolled unto its door. By Pilate's order a seal was put upon the stone, and a

guard of soldiers was placed by it. On the third day, *Behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightening, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.* The angel said to the women who came unto the sepulchre, Jesus who was crucified is not here; *for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.**

The women who visited the sepulchre in the morning after Christ arose, did not expect in their setting out to find him alive, for their design was to anoint the dead body with the spices they had prepared. None of the disciples of Christ expected his resurrection. They never could understand during his life how his dying, and to be sure in such ignominy, was reconcileable with his Messianship. They were slow to believe in the resurrection of Christ, after the event had taken place. The force of evidence alone gained their faith. The appearances of Christ to them were continued at different times and places, when few and many were together, during the course of forty days.

* Matth. xxviii.

He was seen of above 500 brethren at once; of whom the greater part remained alive when Paul wrote his first epistle to the church of Corinth; many years after the ascension.

The story of the watch placed at Christ's sepulchre, *That his disciples came and stole him away while they slept*, is full of absurdities. They were hired to tell it by a large sum of money given them by the chief priests and elders of the Jews. Do men need bribing to tell the truth? Does not the design of a bribe always carry in it a wish to conceal facts? Besides, as it is well known that those who slept on guard, were if detected, punished by the Roman laws with death, the soldiers would not have dared to confess themseves asleep when on duty, had not the Jewish rulers agreed to pacify Pilate on their behalf. Had there been the least pretext for the story the soldiers told, the chief priests would have been the first men in Judea to bring the watch to punishment; as that would have given credibili y to the account which they strove to propagate. Every thing relative to the conduct of the chief priests in this affair, carries fraud in the face of it, and confirms the truth of Christ's resurrection. Moreover, the testimony given by the watch relative to a

which, by their own confeſſion, took place while they were aſleep, is of ſuch a nature, as is wholly inadmiſſible before a court of juſtice, or by the dictates of common ſenſe. Are men to be credited in affirming a fact, which they declare to have happened at a time when they could have no conſciouſneſs of it? Is there an honeſt man of common underſtanding upon the globe, who would venture to decide in any thing of conſequence on ſuch teſtimony?

It has been objected to the truth of Chriſt's reſurrection that he did not ſhow himſelf after his death to his judges, and his enemies in general. To obviate this difficulty, it may be obſerved, that if Chriſt after he left the ſepulchre had gone into their preſence, they probably would, from the malice and blindneſs they had diſcovered, have conſidered the appearance as an idle dream; and have remained as obſtinate as they were after the reſurrection of Lazarus. But let us ſuppoſe that by ſuch an appearance they had all been gained over to the belief of the fact, and had become Chriſt's diſciples, would not the enemies of the goſpel have ſaid, that ſince all the great men in the nation had received it, the whole was a contrived plan, and therefore ought to be given up as a cunningly deviſed fable?

This objection would have carried much more plausibility in it than any that can now be urged. Christianity did not rise up under the patronage of the powerful and the great. It was left to work its way in the world by its internal evidence, and the gracious aids of its founder. Several persons of learning and note were converted to it in its infancy; among these was Saul of Tarsus; but they became friends to th gospel in a way that gives not the leas tenance to the suggesti n, tha birth to the wisdom of his crucified was to the Jews and to the Greeks foolish

Within a short time urrection, his disciple proclaimed it in Jerus to death; and wro ground that he was a and preached this do Lord working with the word with signs t

To conclude, we from the miracles of cts, and from those o Apostles, that all scri ration of God.

DISCOURSE V.

The evidence from the Prophecies conſidered; ſeveral popular objections anſwered; and the diſcourſes concluded with an improvement.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 16.

All ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs.

IN the two laſt diſcourſes, arguments were introduced to prove the divine inſpiration of the ſcriptures, from the nature of the religion they contain, and the miracles recorded in them. I now proceed to a *third* argument, derived from the fulfilment of their prophecies.

BY prophecy is meant, the foretelling of events that are not within the reach of human probability, and of which no knowledge

can be obtained beforehand but from God. To look into futurity and discern such events, with the time and circumstances of their coming into existence, is peculiar to the infinite mind. Isaiah xlvi. 9, 10. *Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.*

That the scriptures abound with prophecies, will be denied by none who have read them. The prophecies are so interwoven with the sacred writings, as not to be separated. If the predictions were not delivered before the events which they hold up as future, had happened, we must give up the Bible, and consider it as a forgery. But if the prophets were let into the secrets of futurity, as we have abundant evidence from the fulfilment of their predictions, they were immediately enlightened from on high, and the scriptures are demonstrated to be the word of the Lord. It has been often proved that the prophecies respecting the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, the coming of Jesus of Nazareth, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and many others,

were deliverd prior to the events which anſwer to them. The argument in favor of the divine original of the Bible from prophecy, carries irreſiſtible force, when we reflect on the conduct of providence in fulfilling predictions at the preſent time, which all will grant were written and publiſhed many ages ago. To two prophecies of this kind, I now call your attention.

I SHALL begin with the prophecy concerning Iſhmael, Abraham's ſon by Hagar, recorded in Gen. xvi. As that woman was wandering in the wilderneſs, "The angel "of the Lord ſaid unto her, I will multiply "thy ſeed exceedingly, that it ſhall not be "numbered for multitude.—Behold, thou "art with child, and ſhalt bear a ſon, and "ſhalt call his name Iſhmael; becauſe the "Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he "will be a wild man; his hand will be a-"gainſt every man, and every man's hand "againſt him: and he ſhall dwell in the "preſence of all his brethren." This prediction principally relates to Iſhmael's poſterity; but a ſmall part of it, beſide his birth, could have any accompliſhment in his perſon. A numerous ſeed deſcended from him, which remain to this day. It is ſaid of

his defcendants, in Gen. xxv. 18. That "they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goeft towards Aſſyria." The place here aſſigned to them is the ſame with what was afterwards in ſcripture called *Arabia*, and continues to have the ſame name, and to be poſſeſſed by the ſame people, to the preſent time. The Arabians have never been conquered either by the Aſſyrians, Perſians, Greeks, Romans, Tartars, or any other nation. They have always been a peſt to mankind, and have practiſed robberies upon them. Their hand has been againſt every man, and of courſe, every man's hand has been againſt them, but none have been able to conquer them. They have lived in the midſt of all their brethren. In the earlier periods of their hiſtory, the defcendants of Abraham by Keturah, and the poſterity of Iſaac bordered upon them. To whatever power theſe neighbours, or others, roſe, they retained their dominion; and were not driven from any part of their territories. "They have from "firſt to laſt maintained their independency, "and notwithſtanding the moſt powerful "efforts for their deſtruction, ſtill dwell in "the preſence of all their brethren, and in "the preſence of all their enemies."*

* Newton on the Prophecies, in two Volumes, 9th Edition, p. 25, 26. Vol. 1.

WHO but the omniſcient God could have foreſeen the ſtate of the deſcendants of Iſhmael? Is not the fulfilment of the predictions concerning them a ſtriking proof in ſupport of the divine original of the ſcriptures?

THE prophecies reſpecting the ſtate of the Jews, which have been fulfilled in the latter ages, and are now fulfilling, are too remarkable to be paſſed by in ſilence, when attending to the preſent ſubject. The diſperſion and the wretchedneſs of that people were foretold by Moſes. The curſes which ſhould fall upon them for their diſobedience, are particularly and largely denounced in Deut. xxviii. I ſhall ſelect a few paſſages only; ver. 37. *And thou ſhalt become an aſtoniſhment, a proverb, and a by-word, among all nations whither the Lord thy God ſhall lead thee.* Verſes 64, 65, 66. *And the Lord ſhall ſcatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth unto the other; and there thou ſhalt ſerve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and ſtone. And among theſe nations ſhalt thou find no eaſe, neither ſhall the ſole of thy foot have reſt; but the Lord will give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and ſorrow of mind: And thy life ſhall hang in doubt before thee; and thou ſhalt fear day*

and night, and ſhalt have none aſſurance of thy life. Theſe predictions were in a degree fulfilled by the captivity of the kingdoms of Iſrael and Judah, by the Aſſyrians and Chaldeans; but have received a fuller accompliſhment in the deſtruction of Jeruſalem by the Romans, and in the preſent diſperſion of the Jews. Theſe laſt events were foretold by Jeſus Chriſt, in Luke xxi. 24. *And they ſhall fall by the edge of the ſword, and ſhall be led away captive into all nations: and Jeruſalem ſhall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

The Jews were ſlaughtered in immenſe numbers, when their city was taken by Titus the Roman general. A vaſt multitude has periſhed ſince, by maſſacres and perſecutions. The Jews have not been permitted to poſſeſs the land of Canaan or Paleſtine, for more than 1700 years; and they are ſcattered through Aſia, and through moſt of the countries of Europe and Africa; they are found on the American continent, and its adjacent iſlands. Their land has paſſed from one ſet of conquerors to another, and is now in the hands of the Turks; and remains in a low and wretched ſtate. The Jews ſince their laſt diſperſion have, for the moſt part, found no reſt; but the

Lord has given them *a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind.* They have not enjoyed the rights of other citizens in the places where they have lived, they have been baniſhed from many kingdoms; and in not a few inſtances, government has laid its hand on the property of that unhappy people, in a way of fine and confiſcation. They have been deteſted by the nations, and have been *a by-word* among them. However criminal the Jews may have been, the benevolent heart is pained by even a ſummary recital of their ſufferings, and is rejoiced at the milder treatment they have met with of late. We hope that the period is at hand when their calamities will ceaſe, by the univerſally opening a door for their enjoyment of freedom, as is done by the ſpirit of the civil conſtitution of the United States of America; and above all by their union with the Gentiles throughout the world under the Meſſiah.

It is remarkable that the Jews, tho' they have met with ſuch hardſhips and cruelties, yet remain a diſtinct people. This is the Lord's doing; and verifies what was ſpoken long ago by the prophets. I ſhall only mention in this place a paſſage recorded in Jerem. xxx. 11. addreſſed to Iſrael, *For I*

am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished. The Jews have not, like other nations, been swallowed up and lost in conquests, by intermingling with their conquerors, or with those among whom they have lived. Tho' they have had the strongest inducements to intermarry, and to blend in all respects, with the Gentiles, they, as a body, remain as widely separated from them by blood and religion as ever. However, they have, in some instances, externally complied with the idolatrous rites of the Romish church, to avoid the cruelties of the court of inquisition, they have at the same time adhered to the faith of their ancestors; and when they have escaped from the danger of the rack, they have renounced christianity in every form, and openly returned to their religion. They remain to this day a striking proof that the author of the prophecies respecting them is divine; and consequently that the scriptures are given by inspiration of God.

Would our limits permit, we might point to the fulfilment of many prophecies, which were delivered long before the events

they predict were brought into existence. Babylon now lies in ruins, "a possession for the bittern, and pools of water." Tyre, once "a mart of nations," is made "like the top of a rock; a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea." We behold the man of sin, whose rise was predicted in the prophecies of the Old and New Testament, "sitting in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God; whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders." And, to name no more, we behold now fulfilling the prophecy recorded in Revelation xvii. 16. "And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate, and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire." The European kingdom which lead the way in giving temporal dominion to the beast revived under the antichristian tyranny, is now seizing on the wealth and destroying the influence which she once gloried in giving to the Roman Pontiff. We are furnished with abundant proof, that the pens of the prophets were guided by Him who, from eternity, beholds all the events of time. The nearer we approach to the end of the world, the evidence in support of the inspiration of the Bible

from the fulfilment of the prophecies, becomes more and more clear and convincing. Whatever abuſes are made of the increaſing light by the wicked, "the wiſe ſhall underſtand."

My deſigned brevity on the copious ſubject of theſe diſcourſes, forbids me to add to the foregoing arguments. I ſhall, after noticing a few popular objections, conclude with a practical improvement.

Some have attempted to countenance their diſlike of the ſcriptures, by ſaying, that the language adopted in ſome parts of thoſe writings, particularly in certain paſſages in the Old Teſtament, puts modeſty to the bluſh.

Perſons of much information will not be perplexed with this difficulty. It will at once occur to them, that when God ſpeaks to any part of the human race, he muſt addreſs them in a language which they underſtand, or the deſign of revelation will be loſt. It muſt follow of courſe, that the language of the age and the place when and where the revelation is made, muſt be adopted. The meaning of particular words is conſtantly altering by uſage. The word *knave*, for inſtance, in our language, was heretofore underſtood to mean a *diligent ſervant*;

but cuſtom now appropriates it to one who is guilty of *fraud* in his dealings with mankind. Cuſtom is as much the ſtandard of decency in the clothing of our thoughts, as in the clothing of our bodies. Some of the words and phraſes in our tranſlation of the Bible, which may appear indelicate when compared with modern ſtyle, did not offend againſt delicacy two hundred years ago; and they may not two hundred years hence, or in a much ſhorter term. Among a civilized people it is as eaſy to diſcern a rotation in words and phraſes, as in any thing elſe that is equally under human control. It would be very ſtrange indeed, if the original language of the pentateuch, which was committed to writing more than three thouſand years ago, perfectly ſuited the various taſtes which have prevailed in ſtyle, from the days of Moſes to our time. It is to be remarked that the books which he wrote have paſſed through very different ſtates of ſociety, in the lapſe of ſo many ages; to each of which it is impoſſible that they ſhould be compleatly conformed: Yet the manner in which thoſe books were written will abide the teſt of ſound criticiſm at the preſent era of high literary improvement.

Let us admit, for a moment, that the whole phraſeology and manner of writing in the moſt ancient parts of the Jewiſh ſcriptures, perfectly correſponded with modern taſte—I ſay, let us make this ſuppoſition, in order to learn whether that part of the Bible which is accuſed of indelicacy, would be as defenſible as it now is. We may diſcern at once the effect of the ſuppoſed change. The men who cavil now, would immediately tack about, and exclaim againſt the pentateuch as a forgery, from its ſtyle. Hence, we ſee that the antiquity of the ſtyle uſed in the Moſaic writings, as well as in other parts of ſcripture, is a matter of importance in the controverſy with infidels. It was as proper that the ſacred penmen ſhould adopt the language and manner of writing peculiar to their own times, as that in alluding to mountains in their diſcourſes to the Jews, they ſhould name *Horeb*, *Carmel*, *or Hermon*, rather than the *Allegany*, or the *Andes*. After what has been ſaid on the change of the meaning of words and the ſtate of ſociety, it is evident that no one has any juſt cauſe to impeach the language of the ſcriptures of offences againſt modeſty.

The diſputes about what the religion of the Bible is, among thoſe who profeſs to

adopt it, have been urged by ſome as an objection againſt its divine original. To this it may be anſwered,

1ſt. THAT the enemies of divine revelation are not agreed among themſelves. Some infidels profeſs to believe that God is a good being; others deny that any ſuch concluſion can be formed. Some of them conſider the ſoul of man as immortal; whilſt others ſuppoſe that it dies with the body. If the diſputes among chriſtians overthrow chriſtianity, the diſputes among deiſts overthrow deiſm. The objection weighs nothing on either ſide, and is wholly impertinent.

2dly. A CONSIDERABLE number of the controverſies among chriſtians do not reſpect the eſſentials of their religion; but are to be accounted for from the manner in which they are educated, the religious treatiſes they read, the perſons with whom they aſſociate in the early periods of ſerious thoughtfulneſs, and ſimilar cauſes. Differences of this kind do not prove that the Bible inculcates oppoſite principles; for it is admitted that they do not materially affect what is neceſſary to fit men for everlaſting happineſs.

3dly. It is granted that opinions have been maintained by some who profess to believe in the inspiration of the scriptures, which strike at their fundamental truths. But the rise of damnable heresies is so far from overthrowing the Bible, that it confirms it; for that book contains many predictions that such errors will appear; especially in the last days.

Violent prejudices have been conceived against the religion of Jesus Christ, from the bad things which have been done under the cloak of it. To remove this stumbling block, let it be observed,

1st. That if the bad things which have been done by those who call themselves christians, go to the subversion of the gospel, deism must be overthrown according to the same plan of reasoning. I presume that no one who is the most warmly engaged in support of infidelity, will affirm that all deists have shown high reverence to the Deity in their behaviour, or that they have all been men of sobriety, justice, mercy and truth. We have to acknowledge with grief, that many abominable things have been done by persons who have called themselves the disciples of Jesus Christ; but if we must give up our religion on account of their conduct,

the deists must give up theirs on account of the impious and debauched morals of some of their order.

2dly. THERE is nothing in the nature of revealed religion which tends to the corruption of morals; but every thing in it tends to make bad men better. The moral law requires holiness, and forbids every sin. The gospel breathes the same spirit. It promises pardon and happiness only to the penitent, and encourages with the hope of a crown of righteousness, patient continuance in well doing. The punishments threatened to the wicked are suited to alarm them, and to deter from the practice of iniquity. The religion of Jesus Christ has actually had the happiest influence on those who have cordially embraced it; as has appeared from their lives and deaths.

3dly. WICKED men would not cloak their wickedness under the garb of the christian profession, unless there were something in the gospel which recommends it to the consciences of mankind. There could be no counterfeit coin, if there were no real coin. Men do not counterfeit iron or lead; but silver and gold, or something that represents the value of these precious metals. Those persons who commit iniquity under

the maſk of friendſhip to the goſpel, are ſo far from proving it to be of no worth, that even they themſelves by implication, teſtify in its favor, though it is againſt their luſts.

4thly. We ought not to conclude againſt the worth of the chriſtian religion from its abuſes, on account of the abſurdities which ſuch an inference will draw after it. We muſt, to be conſiſtent with ſuch a concluſion, pronounce all the bleſſings of common providence to be evils in themſelves; for they all have been, and ſtill are, ſhamefully abuſed. If we pronounce every thing bad, and to be avoided, which has been employed for a bad purpoſe, we muſt conſider as evil, food and raiment, the ground on which we tread, the ſtreams that water it, the produce of the garden and the field, the light which ſtrikes our eyes, and the air we breathe. We need not wonder that perſons who diſpute againſt the goodneſs of God, from the pains they bring upon themſelves by abuſing it, wiſh to take refuge in annihilation, and indulge the forlorn hope that by ſuicide they ſhall haſten their return to the womb of nothing.

5thly. It will be acknowledged by every candid obſerver, that the religion of the goſpel promotes ſocial happineſs in every circle

in which it reigns. It prevents the wretchedneſs which flows from riot and debauchery, ſuppreſſes the malignant paſſions, and diffuſes the calm and pure pleaſures of temperance, diligence, contentment, and friendſhip. Whatever perſecutions have been endured for righteouſneſs' ſake, it is too plain to be denied, that the practice of chriſtianity gives a happineſs to individuals and to collective bodies, to which thoſe are ſtrangers who treat it with contempt. It has moreover been abundantly demonſtrated by able writers, that where it is externally regarded by the inhabitants of a country in general, their morals are not ſo looſe as are thoſe of nations devoted to pagan idolatry.

It is hoped that the obſervations which have been made, will be thought ſufficient to wipe away the reproach which has been caſt upon the chriſtian religion, from the bad things that have been done by its hypocritical profeſſors.

Thoſe who reject the divine authority of the Bible, have endeavored to juſtify their unbelief, by pleading, that they cannot be under obligations to conform their faith and practice to a book, which contains myſteries above the comprehenſion of the human mind.

If the objections of this kind are juſt, it will follow that we are not bound to believe any thing which we cannot comprehend. But is there a man on the earth, "in his right mind," who will avow this conſequence? We are unable to comprehend the works of nature with which we are ſurrounded. We know not how water is congealed into the hardneſs of ſtone; nor can we comprehend the growth of even a ſingle blade of graſs. Man is a myſtery to himſelf. He cannot tell why certain kinds of food nouriſh his body rather than others; nor how his limbs are put in motion by the volitions of his ſoul. If we are not bound to give our aſſent to any thing which we cannot underſtand in all its parts, we muſt deny facts which are daily taking place before our eyes, yea more, we muſt deny our own exiſtence. The objection we are now conſidering will go to atheiſm; for no creature can fathom abſolute eternity. If there be a God he never had a beginning. When the human mind contemplates this ſubject it is ſwallowed up and loſt. "Canſt thou by ſearching find out God? Canſt thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?"

In the ſupernatural revelation God hath

made of his will, he ſpeaks like himſelf—a Being infinitely great. Were all the myſteries which are delivered in the ſacred volume, perfectly on a level with our limited minds lately called into exiſtence, the government of the moral world would be placed in a lower grade than the kingdom of nature, and we ſhould not have the ſame evidence as we now have that the finger of God is imprinted on the ſcriptures. But tho' ſome of the doctrines of the Bible are ſo high that we can know but little concerning them in this dark probationary ſtate, they can be ſufficiently apprehended even by babes in underſtanding to obtain eternal life. Beſides, the truths which are moſt myſterious are ſo interwoven with thoſe which are plain, that if we reject the former, we muſt reject the latter. The various parts of this remarkable book form one harmonious ſyſtem of faith and practice.

The laſt objection that I ſhall notice is taken from the ſmall extent within which the writings of the Old and New Teſtament have been known. Since the ſcriptures exhibit an excluſive claim of guiding the human race in the way of truth and happineſs, it is contended, that their partial ſpread is inconſiſtent with the character of Him who is

the Father of all mankind, and is no respecter of persons; and that therefore they cannot be given by inspiration of God. To obviate this objection, let the following things be considered,

1st. God in his common providence distributes his gifts, both of body and mind, very variously; as daily experience teaches. It will not be pretended that men have just cause to complain of him, because he bestows upon some a more vigorous animal frame, or a higher degree of intellect, than upon others. No reason can be assigned, why the means of moral and religious improvement may not be as greatly diversified, by the sovereign of the universe, as other blessings are. Besides, the obligation derived from privileges, is proportioned to their nature and degree. Mankind are not punished for disregarding truths of which they could have no knowledge; but for resisting the light that has shone before them.

2dly. Since the whole human race have forfeited every favor from the hand of God, by sin, he may justly exclude them all from happiness, and consequently may deny them opportunity of becoming acquainted with those writings which contain the words of eternal life. All the favors enjoyed by

apoſtate creatures, flow from divine ſovereign mercy; which excludes every idea of claim on their part. Thoſe, therefore, who are left in heatheniſh darkneſs, experience no injuſtice. Their demerit is not leſſened, nor is their ſtate rendered any more deplorable, by reaſon of God's conduct in giving the ſcriptures to others. If any refuſe to receive them becauſe they are not known throughout the world, they diſcover great ingratitude, and perverſeneſs. God has conferred upon us, the inhabitants of the United States of America, a larger portion of freedom than is poſſeſſed by moſt nations. Shall we murmur, and throw away our liberties, becauſe providence has not cauſed all our fellow-men to enjoy the ſame bleſſings? Who hath licenſed a worm of the duſt to dictate to the ſovereign Ruler of heaven and earth! Or to ſay unto him, "What doeſt thou!"

3dly. It is owing to the criminal indifference of mankind to the ſcriptures, that the knowledge of them is confined within ſuch narrow limits. Had, for inſtance, the ſeveral families of the ſons of Noah, in their diſperſions from the plain in the land of Shinar, been friends to the truths which had at that time been revealed, they would

have faithfully preſerved them, and made high exertions to tranſmit them to their poſterity. Had the word of the Lord been ſweet unto their taſte, they would have been much more deſirous of handing it down to their ſucceſſors, than they were their knowledge of the arts. A like pious zeal paſſing from one generation to another, would have prevented the ignorance of divine revelation which ſoon prevailed. By the time of Abraham there was a general departure to idolatry. That renowned patriarch ſojourned in many places, after he left Ur of the Chaldees in obedience to the command of God; for the ſetting up his worſhip in a pure form. But the people among whom he reſided, in Canaan, in Egypt, and in other countries, did not improve the opportunity of learning from him the truths and laws which he had immediately communicated to him from God, or had been tranſmitted to him through the preceding inſpired men. The Egyptians paid no laſting attention to the mighty works wrought among them by the arm of Jehovah, in the days of Moſes; nor did they regard the means of inſtruction in the knowledge of the revealed will of God, to which they might have had acceſs. When the Iſraelites were ſettled in Canaan, they were placed in the central ſpot

of the then known world. On different ſides of them lay Egypt, Arabia, Syria, Chaldea, and Aſſyria; out of which nations aroſe the firſt empires of note among mankind. Under thoſe monarchies the arts and ſciences were firſt cultivated, and from them have been ſpread among the inhabitants of the weſtern regions. The land given to the children of Iſrael is waſhed on one ſide by the Mediterranean ſea, and bordered on the once famous cities of Tyre and Sidon; which extended their commerce to diſtant countries. To the nations of the eaſt the choſen people were well known, whilſt they dwelt in Canaan. By their captivity under the Aſſyrians and Chaldeans, the ſacred books were carried into many parts of Aſia; where they were kept by the diſperſed Jews until the day when the Meſſiah appeared. In the ages which followed the return of ſome of the captives to Jeruſalem under Cyrus, and the rebuilding of their city and temple, the Jews became well known to the Greeks and the Romans. The Apoſtles in their time carried the goſpel far beyond the bounds of Judea, and preached the word of eternal life among the Gentiles.

If there had been a general love of divine truth among the human race, the ſcriptures

would have been disseminated far and wide on this inhabited globe. From the inattention to the inspired writings which has appeared in the conduct of mankind, it is manifest that they have not chosen to retain God in their knowledge. Instead of charging him with an unjust partiality, let them confess that sin is the cause of the extensive reign of heathen darkness. It is wholly owing to the mere sovereign mercy of God, that the knowledge of divine revelation has not perished from the earth.

HAVING taken a brief view of some of the principal arguments in support of the truth and inspiration of the Bible, and attempted to obviate several objections, I proceed to improve the subject.

1. WE may reflect on the unreasonable and dangerous conduct of those who are endeavoring to undermine, and destroy the influence of revealed religion; by representing it as the work of visionary or interested men. Many of the deists have never given themselves the trouble of examining into the evidences of the truth and inspiration of the scriptures; but having picked up here and there something which they dislike in them, either by desultory reading, or from promiscuous company, they proceed to assert

with great confidence, that thoſe writings are the work of a mercenary prieſthood, or deſigning politicians. Such treatment of a book which claims a divine origin, not only announces the badneſs of their hearts who thus haſtily reject it, but does no honor to their underſtandings. Among the few infidels who have gone into elaborate diſquiſitions concerning the authority of the ſcriptures, methods have been adopted, by men of genius and ſcience, to overthrow thoſe writings, which carry in them the groſſeſt abſurdities. If the ſame kind of reaſoning were employed on any other ſubject, they themſelves would look upon it with contempt. For the ſake of evading the evidence from miracles, deiſts have labored to eſtabliſh ſuch rules, for determining the exiſtence of facts of which we have not been perſonal witneſſes, as would deſtroy our faith in all hiſtory. They have fallen into errors of the moſt palpable kind, in their attempts to prove that the Bible is at variance with itſelf. As, for inſtance, when the different writers of any part of its hiſtory, do not ſay preciſely the ſame thing, or one of them mentions facts omitted by another, infidels reject the whole as the contradictory accounts of lying impoſters. At the ſame time they will give full credit to many au-

thors of civil history, who, in narrating the same general events, mention different circumstances from each other, and will speak of such historians with applause. Deists will grant that God may destroy countries by the pestilence, famine, or earthquakes; but if he employ men as the instruments of his wrath, as he did in cutting off the inhabitants of Canaan, they cry out, *cruelty! horrid* cruelty! They overlook the proof of the inspiration of the scriptures, which is furnished by miracles of the most striking kind. They shut their eyes against the light that shines with meridian brightness, in the fulfilment of the prophecies. They withhold no exertions, in their power, to heap reproach upon that pure and benevolent religion, which corresponds with the divine character, opens a door of hope to the guilty, and conducts the humble and the penitent to a world of everlasting joy. The open enemies of the gospel, strive to bring into universal contempt the only religion that can reconcile mankind to God, and unite them in permanent love to one another. Infidels themselves are very much indebted, for their speculative knowledge of the Deity and moral virtue, to the Bible. By rejecting it they discover their ingratitude, and short sightedness.

WHAT advantages do deists expect to derive from trampling under foot the holy scriptures? They have nothing to put in the place of the doctrines which they explode, that can yield them solid enjoyment in their gayest seasons. What consolation can their principles afford, when carried into practice, in days of trouble, or in the hour of serious reflection? Their philosophy cannot alleviate their pains; by assuring them of a future state, or by pointing out the road which leads to substantial interminable happiness. But do they wish to rid themselves of the belief of a future state of rewards and punishments? and hope to die like the brutes? Wonderful sagacity! What! do the honor and happiness of man stand on a level with the honor and happiness of the beasts of the field!

WHAT benefit will society derive from the spread of deistical principles? Have they ever when fully imbibed, reformed a single vicious person? Experience demonstrates that in proportion as they prevail among a people, they weaken reverence towards the name of God, and are accompanied with [illegible] morals. Such are the unhappy effects which infidelity produces: nor can they be denied on account of the regular lives of a

few of its friends, who are immerſed in ſtudy, or whoſe high official rank impels to pay a decent reſpect to the general opinion. Civil laws will be found feeble reſtraints on communities, when the reſtraints of revealed religion are deſtroyed.

THOSE who make a direct attack on the ſacred volume are highly criminal. Nothing can juſtify them in acting againſt the light that is held up before them, in the word and works of God. None are required to believe the ſcriptures without ſufficient evidence to ſatisfy the rational mind; but ſince they are abundantly ſupported by the ſcheme of religion they contain, as well as by external teſtimonies, none can deny their divine original without incurring infinite guilt. The difficulties that have been ſtarted relative to their hiſtory, their faith and morals, may be removed to the ſatisfaction of the candid. It is impious in creatures to ſuggeſt that a better manifeſtation of truth might have been made than is exhibited in them. There is a depth in God's wiſdom and knowledge which we cannot fathom. He only knows how to diſplay his perfections before finite intelligencies in the beſt manner to glorify his holy name, and what are the moſt ſuitable means to bring ſinners

to repentance. A cavilling temper is never satisfied. If any will not hear Moses and the Prophets, Christ, and the Apostles, neither would they be persuaded tho' one rose from the dead.

What confusion would fill the mind of a deist, should one of his converts address him in the moment of remorse, "You, Sir, "first taught me to laugh at religion—then "to doubt its truth—and then to trample "it under foot. I followed you next into "vice—I threw off restraint—I have not "feared God, nor have I regarded man. "I tremble to think of my end: For tho' "I still wish to disbelieve, my conscience "whispers—*what if the gospel I have denied "should prove true at last!*" How, O ye sons of infidelity! who boast of making disciples to your creed, and to every fashionable vice—how can ye endure to meet the souls you have deluded and undone, at the bar of God! They will rise as swift witnesses against you before him who will judge the world in righteousness. Be entreated to read the scriptures with a candid, serious temper, and impartially examine the arguments which establish their truth and inspiration. God grant that you may no longer

remain enemies of the Gospel; but that it may be rendered effectual to your salvation.

2. In a review of the subject of these discourses, we are taught the duty of the friends of revealed religion, to labor for its defence, and to make it the guide of their lives.

We declare with our lips our belief in the truth and inspiration of the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and that the enjoyment of them is a privilege of inestimable worth. We profess a high veneration for these writings; because they contain a rich and inexhaustible treasure of divine knowledge, and because they point out the only way to escape everlasting misery, and to obtain eternal life. We cannot testify our gratitude for having the oracles of God committed unto us, if we do not search into their meaning with diligence, and listen to them with a humble and devout frame of mind. The man of real piety, delights in the law of the Lord, and in it doth he meditate day and night. He crieth after knowledge, and lifteth up his voice for understanding; he seeketh her as silver, and searcheth for her as for hidden treasures. It is surprising to find in some persons of mature age and good abilities, among the professed

friends of the Bible, but a ſmall acquaintance with its hiſtory or doctrines. Inſtead of attending to the word of the Lord their minds are ſwallowed up in worldly purſuits, or are diverted from the ſtudy of it, by books of wit and humour.

MANY of the difficulties which occur in the reading of the ſcriptures, will be removed by comparing one paſſage with another, relative to the ſame ſubject in different parts of thoſe writings. The doctrines which they contain that far ſurpaſs our comprehenſion, cannot be eradicated without giving up the ſacred volume into the hands of its avowed enemies, and placing it on the ſame ground with the works of a heathen Plato, or Seneca. Thoſe who humbly wait on God will be guided into all neceſſary truths: "The meek will he guide in judgment; and the meek will he teach his way." Believers will be kept by the power of God through faith unto ſalvation.

THERE is reaſon to expect from preſent appearances, and from the prophecies, that the church will meet with violent aſſaults from infidelity, between the period in which we live, and the time when "the earth ſhall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the ſea." Now, when the en-

emy is coming in like a flood, we are loudly called upon to lift up a ſtandard againſt him. The performance of this duty, requires our attention to the arguments which demonſtrate the ſcriptures to be true, and from God; and our earneſt endeavors to maintain the faith which was once delivered unto the ſaints. Chriſtian teachers are under a peculiar and ſolemn charge, to continue in the things which they have learned of Jeſus Chriſt; and to labor to impreſs the belief on the minds of others, that *all ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs.* Above all, let every friend of revealed religion imbibe its ſpirit, and obey its laws. If we love the word of the Lord, we ſhall place a high value on the ſabbath, and on all divine inſtitutions: And ſhall bear teſtimony againſt the various courſes which diſhonor God, and tend to deſtroy mankind. Let parents teach their children the doctrines and duties of chriſtianity, and enforce their inſtructions by a holy example.

Doth the goſpel point out immortality to man, let this ſolemnize our minds, and incite us to give diligence to make our calling and election ſure. Nothing can counterbalance the loſs of the ſoul. What are all

the pleaſures, the riches, and the honors of the world, when compared with "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away!" Let us remember that the grace of God which bringeth ſalvation, "teacheth us, that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent world; looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt."

3. I SHALL conclude theſe diſcourſes with an addreſs to the riſing generation.

DEAR YOUTH,

YOU are coming into active life in a day very different, in ſeveral reſpects, from any former period. The late revolution in our country has extended its influence far and wide; and appears deſigned by providence to draw after it a train of conſequences, whoſe importance riſes to a height that baffles the calculations of the human mind. We are bound to give thanks to God for the rare privilege we enjoy of diſcuſſing every ſubject as publicly as we pleaſe, and of expreſſing our ſentiments without reſtraint. It is a melancholy thought that when ſo wide a door is opened for the ſpreading of truth,

error and wickedneſs prevail. Popery and ſuperſtition have received a deep wound; at the ſame time infidelity lifts up its head, and open vices make ſwift and alarming progreſs. The heart of man is the ſame now as it ever has been ſince the apoſtacy; but it ſhows itſelf in a different form from what it has uſually done among chriſtian nations, and calls in principles to juſtify its criminal indulgencies with more confidence than had before been ſeen. Many in our day give out that the age of reaſon is come, and that mankind may now determine for themſelves what is virtue and what is vice, without any regard to the ſcriptures. They ſeem to think themſelves at full liberty, in the ſight of God, to reject any revelation he may make, without incurrring his diſpleaſure. If our choice be the only rule of conduct that is binding upon us, we are placed in a lawleſs univerſe, and are not accountable to God.

Pause a moment—and reflect on the evil and danger of being led aſtray by opinions which flatter the pride of the heart, and are an inlet to every vice. If you regard your own peace and ſafety, you will not liſten to men who ſet their mouth againſt the heavens, and advocate the cauſe of licentiouſneſs.

Look on the effects of infidelity upon thoſe who are ſcoffing at the Bible, and are ſtriving to influence others to treat it with contempt. Do they appear to have the fear of God before their eyes? Can you believe that their real aim is to promote your true happineſs? A ſenſe of propriety, muſt render a ſet of low characters diſguſting to you, who belch out their hatred of religion in the noiſy clubs, where ſerious thoughtfulneſs is baniſhed, and where ardent ſpirits animate the bluſtering hero of the night. Pity the poor creature who curſes the book which forewarns him of his awful fate, and commands him to lead a life of temperance and ſobriety. From perſons of a different deſcription you are in much greater danger of being proſelyted to infidelity. You may in your intercourſe with mankind, meet with deiſts whoſe talents are reſpectable, and whoſe addreſs is engaging. Theſe will conſult your feelings, and will not ſhock you with a ſudden propoſal of renouncing the chriſtian faith; but will ſuggeſt doubts relative to its hiſtorical truth, or the fitneſs of its doctrines, or the juſtice of its precepts.

It is not to be expected that thoſe who have been trained up, from their childhood,

in the belief of the ſcriptures, will renounce them at once, and inſtantly take a leap into the abyſs of deiſm. Perſons who make this dreadful plunge, uſually advance towards it from ſmall beginnings. You will progreſs towards the gulph which has ſwallowed up the avowed enemies of the Bible, if you are in any degree entangled with what goes under the name of *Modern Liberality;* which affirms, that it is a matter of perfect indifference what ſentiments any adopt for their religious creed. It is not pretended by chriſtians, that a mere aſſent to revealed doctrines forms a good character; but they cannot be ſo abſurd as to allow that all opinions are alike friendly to virtue. Is it as probable that the man who believes in annihilation at death, will refrain from perjury, as he who believes that he ſhall exiſt in another world, and that there God will call him to an account for his conduct in this? Have we the ſame reaſon to look for purity in him who worſhips a ſtock or a ſtone, as in him who worſhips Jehovah? Infidels make high profeſſions of liberality, as above defined: But if they ſpeak their real ſentiments, why do they make exertions to deſtroy the faith of others in the Bible? What cauſe can they aſſign for their zeal in proſelyting, if they ef-

teem it to be perfectly indifferent what creed any one adopts?

Were the Bible to perish from among us, there would be no means left, sufficient to prevent paying divine honors to the departed spirits of patriots and heroes, or even to the inanimate creation. The impious, obscene, and cruel rites of paganism would be established, should christianity cease to enlighten us; and our religious state would be the same with that of by far the largest proportion of mankind now on the earth. Human science would not be found a sufficient guard to defend us against such evils; for the learned Greeks and Romans were, at least, as much given to idolatry, as the savages that roam in the desert. The history of the whole heathen world from the days of Abraham until now, exhibits the same melancholy picture with Greece and Rome. A knowledge of the arts and sciences is very useful; but cannot stand in the place of divine revelation.

If any should plead that the miseries which have flown from corrupt rituals would be avoided by annihilating every form of religion, they suppose a fact which can never generally happen, so long as hope and fear remain in the human breast. But if the e

vent they contemplate could be realized, each individual would feel himself licensed to live according to nature, and a scene of wretchedness would ensue, especially in large communities, far surpassing any thing the world has hitherto seen. Neither property, nor chastity, nor life, would be protected; and the earth would groan under the horrors of the infernal regions.

Beware, dear youth, of drinking in the poison of infidelity. Embrace the religion which came from above, and make it the guide of your lives. In this choice you will find light, peace, and joy, and will be secured from falling into fatal snares. Joseph, in the bloom of youth and beauty, was protected in a dangerous moment, by reverencing the laws of Jehovah. He replied to the importunate seducer, *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* Impartially review the evidences of the truth and inspiration of the Bible. If you read this holy book with diligence and meekness, you will be charmed with the pure and benevolent spirit which it breathes; and will be fully persuaded that no being but God can be its author. The miracles recorded in the Old Testament and in the New, and the fulfil-

ment of the prophecies, give a divine sanction to the scriptures.

TRIFLE not away the morning of life in vain amusements, or in hearkening to fables. You are not creatures of a day; but are born for eternity. The present momentary state will be followed with consequences of infinite importance. Secure without delay the glorious immortality set before you in the gospel. From early life may you know the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus: To Him be glory for ever and ever. AMEN.

Samu

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